Retaining a Resilient and Enduring Workforce: Examination of Duty/Position Rotational Assignments for Civilian Acquisition Positions

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April 12, 2015

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Abstract

There is a renewed emphasis across the Army to address the readiness of the Army acquisition workforce's ability to meet current and future requirements of life-cycle management of the Army weapon system portfolio to meet the needs of the warfighter in a rapidly changing political, technological, operational and fiscal environment. Through the use of interviews with senior Army and acquisition workforce personnel and a survey of civilian government employees across the Army acquisition community, the need for additional broadening experiences for Army civilian acquisition employees is evident. Survey results revealed many potential benefits of rotational assignments, such as broader knowledge and skills in other competency areas; continuous learning; networking; improved stakeholder management and development; expanded professional relationships; broader visibility and application of lessons learned, shared ideas, and best practices; and many other benefits. Survey results also revealed risks and disadvantages that would affect the acquisition community with the implementation of rotational assignments, such as short-term disruption to programs, learning curve issues, additional workload, staffing shortages, lost program momentum, and the potential of having more generalists rather than specialists or experts. As posited in interviews with senior Department of Defense civilian leaders, the workforce needs to be prepared and flexible in order to adapt to the changing requirements, technology, threat, and economic challenges. Findings support a strategic approach to providing broadening experiences for civilian acquisition personnel rather than a policy or mandate that limits flexibility in the application of a rotational assignment. Rotational assignments are just one way to improve the resilience of the acquisition workforce by increasing productivity, enhancing employee development, expanding skill variety, and cultivating interactions of individuals and teams across the acquisition community.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background

This research analyzed the use and impact of rotational and developmental assignments of Army acquisition workforce employees on the retention and readiness of the Army acquisition workforce in terms of ability to meet the needs of the warfighter in a rapidly changing fiscal, political, technological, and operational environment. Rotational and developmental assignments as discussed and examined in this research are defined as those broadening assignments that increase an employee's skills, capabilities, and knowledge in one or multiple functional areas while assigned to an organization or functional area other than the employee's primary duty assignment.

The Army acquisition civilian workforce is responsible for providing total life-cycle management across the Army's broad weapon system portfolio, including the development, testing, production, fielding, and all supporting activities of warfighter systems. Anecdotal evidence suggests that current developmental and rotational assignments of Army acquisition civilians are not supported or implemented widely enough to ensure the civilian workforce is positioned to assume the more versatile and flexible duties it will be required to perform because of reduced funding and manpower. This research was intended to address whether rotational and developmental assignments of Army civilian acquisition personnel are supported, utilized, and/or beneficial to the readiness of our warfighters.

This research took into account the current fiscal environment, including the impact of the Budget Control Act (BCA), sequestration, decline in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding, and other significant factors affecting the Department of Defense's (DoD) current and future funding profile. As depicted in Figure 1, funding reductions are imminent in

the DoD, and it is necessary to use the tools available to the acquisition community to create a workforce with the greatest effectiveness and efficiency in the development, production, and fielding of weapon systems to the warfighter. Rotational assignments are just one tool available to use when and where it will best benefit the employee and the organization.

Costs of DoD's Plans in the Context of the Budget Control Act
(Billions of 2013 dollars)
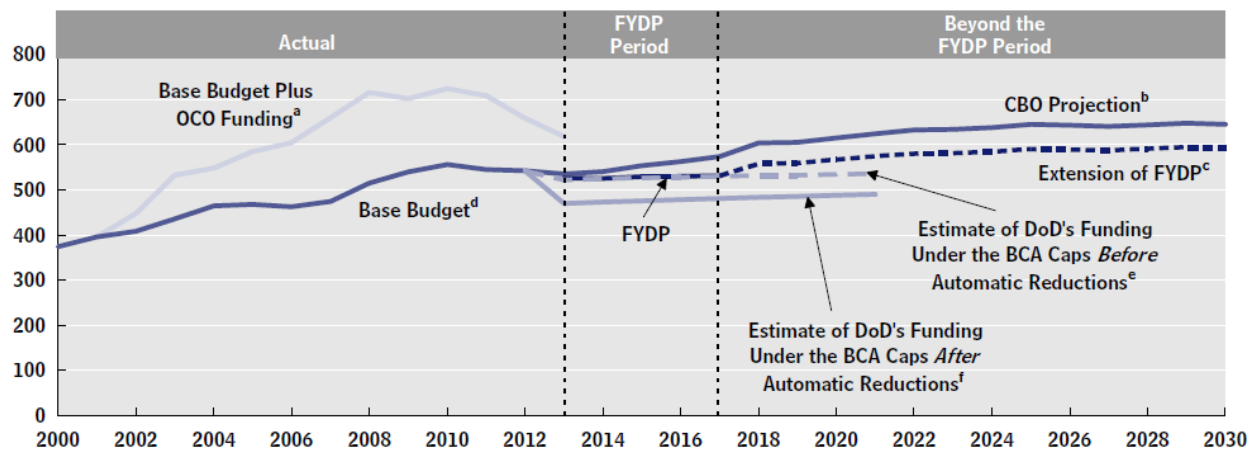
Congressional Budget Office (CBO) chart: (a) Excluding military personnel and OCO; (b) CBO projections incorporate costs consistent with DoD's recent experience; (c) extension of the Future Years Defense Program projects costs of DoD's plans using DoD's estimates where available; (d) base 2013 budget; (e) budget estimates w/o sequestration; (f) budget estimates with sequestration

Figure 1 – CBO Chart: Cost of DoD's Plans in the Context of the Budget Control Act
(Adapted from Defense Business Board, 2013. p. 8)

"The BCA of 2011 imposed caps on annual appropriations for defense from 2013 through 2021; it also established procedures that led to automatic spending reductions, which took effect at the beginning of March 2013" (Congressional Budget Office, 2013, p. 7). Accordingly, the DoD's two major cost reductions or constraints are by means of "reducing the number of uniformed military personnel by 90,000 by 2017 (a decrease of about 6 percent from the number in 2012); and deferring purchases of many new weapon systems until after 2017" (Congressional Budget Office, 2013, p. 10). Cost reductions are necessary based on law, but the

most cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars is assumed to be basic ethical and cultural requirements of the Army acquisition workforce.

It is anticipated that the "Army civilian Workforce will likely shrink further in the next several years, in keeping with guidance from the DoD to scale back its civilian Workforce" (Nataraj, Hanser, Camm, & Yeats, 2014, p. ix). With initiatives and emphasis on identifying and eliminating overhead while right-sizing the civilian workforce (Perry & Abizaid, 2014, p. 6), strategic and innovative approaches to developing the workforce to maintain a state of readiness in the Army is essential to the safety of our soldiers and civilians and the accomplishment of Army missions.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense asked the Defense Business Board to provide recommendations on managing for peak performance with reduced resources (Defense Business Board, 2013). The board's 2013 report on best practices focused on two areas: (1) reducing and consolidating management layers and support staff and (2) working with the Office of Personnel Management to "facilitate reductions in civilian personnel in DoD to match overhead reductions" (p. 30). This research reviews these recommendations and considers the advantages and disadvantages of using job rotation as one method of addressing the readiness of the civilian workforce when faced with reduced resources.

Problem Statement

As readiness of the Defense Acquisition Workforce becomes increasingly volatile due to reduced resources, an aging workforce, limitations imposed by the BCA, and other laws and regulations, it is imperative to the safety and protection of our Nation that the United States retains a resilient and enduring workforce. An enduring workforce is one composed of the appropriate mix of knowledge, skills, and experience to meet the requirements of the Army

acquisition mission over the Future Years Defense Program as well as the demands of the rapidly changing environment. This research paper provides support for an enduring workforce to meet the rapidly changing demands and fluctuations of resources, requirements, and threats. The primary problem this research focuses on is how rotational assignments provide opportunities for our workforce to improve readiness of the warfighter.

Purpose of This Study

This research was intended to examine one of the elements of employee development—rotational assignments—while evaluating the impact on the employee and the organization. This research takes into account the current uncertainties and the fiscal environment when assessing job rotations and broadening assignments. A declining budget and efforts to either reduce or restructure civilian staffing require the use of new and innovative practices to ensure our civilian acquisition workforce continues to be prepared to respond to and support the Army's mission.

The DoD "spends $263 billion annually on military and civilian personnel. Since FY 2001, civilian headcounts have grown 17.5%" (Defense Business Board, 2013, p. 9). "The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the cost of replacing an employee ranges from one-half to five times the person's annual salary depending on the position" (Mathis, Jackson, & Valentine, 2014, p. 164), which includes such costs as separation costs, vacancy costs, replacement costs, training costs, and hidden or indirect costs (Mathis et al., 2014, p. 166).

Significance of This Research

This research builds upon two recent GAO studies (2012a, 2014) by reviewing their findings and recommendations and comparing them with responses from interviews with senior DoD civilians and from a survey of senior Army acquisition civilians. This research compares and contrasts the rotational assignments for civilians and soldiers in the Army acquisition

workforce and examines Army policy and guidance on the support, implementation, and acceptance of rotational assignments.

This research reviews Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1430.16 (2009) and compares it to interviews with senior Army and acquisition workforce members as well as with a survey of members of the Army acquisition community for the purpose of determining whether or not rotational assignments provide or could provide the type of development that would benefit the Army acquisition workforce and individual professional development. This study reviews applications of job rotations in other Government agencies and private industry to assess best practices and other organizations' experience of success, apathy, or failure in the implementation of rotational assignments.

To determine the benefits of and barriers to rotational assignments, interview results with senior DoD civilian employees and survey results are assessed to determine any obstacles to implementation. The *Army Leadership Development Strategy 2013* (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013) is reviewed to determine the alignment of senior Army leadership guidance and actual organizational workforce planning and development efforts. This research examines the content and recommendations of the Defense Business Board (2013) and multiple GAO recommendations while keeping in mind relevant factors such as the impact of projected funding reductions on staffing requirements. For the purpose of shaping the role of rotational assignments in the Army acquisition workforce, this research provides an assessment of the best practices of industry, other Government agencies, and the military to determine whether the Army acquisition workforce could benefit from changes in how the knowledge, skills, and abilities are obtained, transferred, and retained to provide an acquisition workforce that can endure changes and provide broader depth and readiness in support of Army missions.

Overview of the Research Methodology

This research leverages multiple GAO reports and recommendations, a survey of the Army acquisition workforce with both quantitative and qualitative data, interviews with senior Army and acquisition workforce civilians, and the evaluation of research and best practices performed in private industry. Sampling issues involved with this survey questionnaire include available data and factors affecting response rates, such as timing, personal inclination, and acceptance of the method of distribution of the survey. Approximately 15% of the sample (including all General Schedule (GS) 14/15 government civilian employees assigned to Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), MD) and approximately 20% of the subsample (including all Army acquisition GS-14/15 Government civilians at APG) responded to the survey. Some possible explanations for unanswered surveys include limited time of the respondents, unavailability of the respondents, personal inclination to refuse to respond to the survey. With the security issues in place today, some government employees are not authorized to respond to unencrypted email. This survey was distributed in an unencrypted email from the researcher with a link to the survey Web site.

Research Question

How do rotations/developmental assignments impact the organization, mission, and personal and professional development of Army acquisition civilian employees?

Research Hypothesis

Army acquisition civilian employee job rotations will benefit the employee and the organization through improved knowledge and skills, improved retention, improved productivity, or improved innovation and leadership.

Objectives and Outcomes

It is anticipated that when combined with other developmental opportunities such as shadowing, mentoring, coaching, and training, rotational assignments will improve the readiness of the Army acquisition workforce (AAWF) by providing employees with a broader view of the Army acquisition processes, polices, and practices. It is also anticipated that the following constraints will be among the primary limitations to acceptance and feasibility of implementation of rotational assignments on a broad spectrum across the AAWF: (1) multiple employee performance and compensation systems, (2) leadership reluctance to implement (such as in giving up a top performer), (3) employees' negative perceptions of rotation assignments, and (4) a paucity of experts in specific technical fields. This research is expected to provide senior Army leadership with the benefits of, barriers to, and advantages and disadvantages of implementing rotational assignments of Army acquisition employees as part of Army acquisition employee development.

Limitations of the Study

The Army acquisition civilian rotation serves as the independent variable; dependent variables are organizational effectiveness and professional development enhancement. Limitations in this study include time constraints and access to and availability of statistical data. While this research focuses on rotational assignments to improve the development of the AAWF, rotational assignments are only one element in the development of the workforce. Other elements include coaching, mentoring, shadowing, and other developmental efforts. Due to time limitations, the scope of this study is limited to rotational assignments.

Validity of the Research

Possible threats to validity include selection of references, limited factors related to actual population responders to surveys, and extraneous variables. To account for these threats, the research survey will cover senior acquisition workforce members assigned to APG, MD, including an estimated senior Army civilian workforce population of 1,700 (which includes 1,052 GS-14/15 Army acquisition employees at APG; the remainder are not coded as acquisition). This survey population is a sample of the larger AAWF. Extraneous variables include the revised and updated policies, revised schedules, and enacted laws. By including these extraneous variables in the survey, I can account for the influence of these variables on rotational job assignment implementation. Other limiting factors include limited participation in the survey and distinctive aspects of investigator bias. The validity of the data collected is affected by "subjective parameters such as attitudes and values" (Brown, 2011, p. 127).

Reliability of the Responses

To the extent that this research reviews reports and literature, it can be replicated. The survey questionnaire and interviews of senior DoD personnel are the principle components of this research and assessment. The interview results are based on messages, experiences, and responses of two key senior DoD civilian leaders and represent the professional opinions, observations, and knowledge of these interviewees.

The survey results are limited to a sample population of the AAWF, and the sample is composed of senior leaders at the GS-14/15 level (or the equivalent pay grade) across the APG population. One potential reliability issue with the questionnaire (employee survey) is the respondents' comfort level in responding with his or her true feelings. In addition, since this survey was "voluntary and anonymous, those who chose to respond may have strong feelings,

either positive or negative, about the content of the questionnaire, but they may represent only a

small percentage of the total sample" (Brown, 2011, p. 123).

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Research Project Requirements

In this review, many sources are integrated into major topic areas. This is done in order to address the various aspects of rotational assignments—their consequences and limitations, and the effects of specific external forces on workforce development as related to the current fiscal environment and guidance. This literature review focuses on assessing the finding and recommendations of three key GAO reports (2012a, 2012b, and 2014). These reports provide an analysis of current rotational and developmental assignments available to and utilized by the AAWF. The reports provide a basis for determining whether or not there is a benefit to implementing a more robust rotational assignment program to develop the skills, abilities, and experiences to meet the need for a leaner workforce. This research also identifies models, policies, recommended methods, and lessons learned from academia, private industry, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. While focused on the AAWF, the material found within this study may be applicable for use of rotational assignments in other environments.

The research within this study provides an initial set of guidelines as to whether rotational and developmental assignments provide improvements to the expertise, knowledge, and skills of the civilian workforce.

Job Rotation Defined

Job rotation is defined in several ways, but all relate to the development of an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities in some capacity outside of the employee's regular duty assignment for defined and undefined periods of time. One source defined job rotation as "the movement of employees across departments and roles to develop job capabilities" (Song, 2010). Song continued this definition of job rotation as an experience that is "positively related to

increased levels of knowledge generation and offers employees the opportunity to acquire

background, expertise, and a new professional orientation" (Song, 2010, p. 184). One academic

text defined job rotation simply as "the process of shifting a person from job to job" (Mathis, et

al., 2014, p. 121). Job rotation for the purpose of this research includes any assignment that

broadens an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities; this may include such terms as

broadening assignment, developmental assignment, rotational assignment, or other similar

terminology.

Why Consider Rotational or Developmental Assignments?

Guidance has been published to assist in the development of Army leaders. The Army

Leader Development Strategy of 2013 stated that "this strategy will help the Army re-balance the

three crucial leader development components of training, education, and experience" (U.S. Army

Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 3). In addition, the Army emphasizes the need to develop and

sustain a "diverse cadre of highly capable, high-performing, and results-oriented civilian leaders

… to lead effectively in increasingly complex environments" (DoD, 2009, p. 2). Further, DoDI

1430.16 stated that "leadership competencies of the civilian Workforce shall be assessed

periodically, and appropriate learning opportunities (including education, training, self-

development, and assignments) shall be provided to broaden experience and increase leadership

capability" (DoD, p. 2).

In 2001, the GAO "added strategic human-capital management for all federal civilians—

including those at DoD—to [its] High-Risk List because of the long-standing lack of leadership

commitment in this area" (GAO, 2014, p. 1). GAO emphasized the need for strategic workforce

planning as an "iterative, systematic process that addresses two critical needs: (1) aligning an

organization's human-capital program with its current and emerging mission and programmatic

goals and (2) developing long-term strategies for acquiring, developing, and retaining staff to achieve programmatic goals" (GAO, 2014, p. 7).

In a letter to congressional committees dated July 9, 2014, GAO identified areas in need of improvement across DoD:

Current budget and long-term fiscal pressures necessitate that federal government agencies, including the Department of Defense (DoD), operate more strategically and efficiently than ever before, and this includes cost-effective management of human-capital policies and practices…. For fiscal year 2015, DoD budgeted approximately $74 billion for a civilian Workforce of approximately 782,000 full-time equivalents…DoD's civilian Workforce performs a wide variety of duties and responsibilities, including mission-essential combat-support functions—such as logistics, support, and maintenance—that traditionally have been performed by the uniformed military. To successfully address such complex challenges as national security, and other evolving national issues, it is necessary for DoD to attract and retain skilled personnel. Three important elements of Workforce planning include determining the critical skills and competencies necessary to achieve programmatic goals, conducting gap analyses, and developing strategies that are tailored to address any identified gaps….Our body of work on strategic Workforce planning has shown the importance of having the right people, with the right skills, doing the right jobs, in the right places, at the right time. (GAO, 2014, p. 1)

Song concluded that "job rotation is positively related to increased levels of knowledge generation and offers employees the opportunity to acquire background, expertise, and a new professional orientation" (Song, 2010, p. 184). Song continued this assessment by classifying job

rotation as "analogous to immersion in a foreign culture, in that representatives from another functional culture work side by side with 'natives' of the other culture…. The knowledge and understanding gained in job rotation form the basis for effective cross-functional integration" (Song, 2010, p. 184). Mathis et al. (2014) posited that "job rotation fosters a greater understanding of the organization and aids with employee retention by making individuals more versatile, strengthening their skills, and reducing boredom" (p. 319).

With today's budget pressures and the imminent budget reductions, the dynamics of how the Army does business are changing, and the management and development of personnel are changing to address the uncertainty. The BCA of 2011 made it necessary to address change and challenge the status quo. The act reduced the DoD's "out-year budget by 9%, or $487 billion through FY 2021; if OCO funding is absorbed into the base budget as operations in Afghanistan continue to wind down, the combined topline reduction will be approximately 13% by FY 2017" (Defense Business Board Report, 2013, p. 3).

As history has demonstrated, when investments were cut by nearly 40% between 1994 and 1997, "the acquisition Workforce was substantially reduced which led to gaps in experience and critical skill sets" (Defense Business Board, 2013, p. 4). "Many of the senior leaders in the Department today, both military and civilian, have never had to manage under significantly reduced budgets" (Defense Business Board, 2013, p. 6). The Army and the DoD are looking into ways to recruit, retain, and train the workforce.

Advantages of Job Rotation

There is an abundance of literature available on job rotation, including the advantages and disadvantages of job rotation programs. This research attempts to capture the most recent studies, literature, and available resources on the topic of job rotation. Several employment Web

sites assess the current employment climate as one with rapidly evolving skill sets and technological advances, which require employees to be more agile (Monster Insights, 2012). Research demonstrates that rotation programs benefit both organizations and individual employees: "Rotations have helped to knock down silos in IT, spread best practices throughout the organization and create opportunities for subordinates to step up" (Pratt, 2007, p. 35). "When opportunities for promotion within [an] organization are scarce, job rotation through lateral transfers may help rekindle enthusiasm and develop employees' talent" (Mathis et al, 2014, p. 319).

Multiple sources support and explain some advantages and benefits of these developmental efforts. Since job rotation increases the variety of tasks an employee is able to perform, "increasing task variety should, according to recent studies, increase employee satisfaction, reduce mental overload, decrease the number of errors due to fatigue" and improve production and efficiency (Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2014, p. 151). "There are advantages to job rotation with one being that it develops an employee's capabilities for doing several jobs" (Mathis et al., 2014, p. 121).

Other advantages and purposes of cross-functional job rotations include use as a "powerful way of developing organizational high-fliers" (Bennett, 2003, p. 8). Bennett (2003) ascertained that "enabling staff to work in different areas of the organization through cross-functional job rotation and job swaps can contribute to knowledge retention and management by spreading individuals' expertise more widely within the organization" (p. 8). In addition, Bennett posited that job rotations can lead to new or improved relationships across the organization.

Benefit: Big Picture View. As stated by General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, at the October 23, 2012, Association of the United States Army Eisenhower Luncheon, "We must develop leaders with the breadth and depth of experience necessary to meet tomorrow's demands." In DoDI 1430.16, the Army emphasized the need for civilians to have a broad understanding of the overarching mission from an enterprise perspective, which is created through an accumulation of diverse experiences and assignments:

> [An] enterprise-wide perspective involves a broad point of view of the DoD mission and an understanding of individual or organizational responsibilities in relation to the larger DoD strategic priorities. The perspective is shaped by experience and education and characterized by a strategic, top-level focus on broad requirements, joint experiences, fusion of information, collaboration, and vertical and horizontal integration of information. (Department of Defense, 2009, p. 22)

This theme of requiring civilian leaders to develop breadth and depth is captured similarly in the 2013 Army Leader Development Strategy:

> Leaders at all levels embrace both their direct responsibilities for developing leaders as well as understand and support the "big picture" of how the Army deliberately, continuously, and progressively develops leaders…. Army Civilian leaders require a broad understanding of military, political and business related strategies as well as high levels of managerial, leadership, and decision-making skills…. Army Civilians are relied upon to bring about change, both within and outside the organization…. Developing Army Civilian leaders requires an understanding of and commitment for sustaining, developing, and creating depth, breadth and leadership potential at all levels. …The Army must create conditions for successful civilian leader development—it can no longer

rely on the traditional organizational systems of the past…. As with those in uniform, senior leaders must provide opportunities for broadening opportunities for Army Civilians. Such an approach enables the deliberate development of a cadre of Army Civilian leaders with a strategic perspective, competencies to lead people and organizations, the ability to appropriately manage resources and the practical experience to step into critical leadership billets. (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 16)

In a 2014 Information Paper, the Office of the Army Director for Acquisition Career Management stated that "equal-level lateral developmental and broadening experiences that enhance an AAWF members' skills, while allowing them to utilize new found learnings, is extremely valuable to both the individual and the Army" (Murtha, 2014, p. 2). "The Army uses assignment progression, development and broadening opportunities, and outside influences to provide leaders with the experiential opportunities required to reach full potential" (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 12).

Benefit: Innovation. Increased innovation is an additional benefit conferred by job rotations and broadening opportunities, as noted in the 2013 Army Leader Development Strategy:

Leaders develop the broader mindsets required for challenging environments through a variety of experiences. Enhanced broadening experiences build critical thinking skills and the ability to develop innovative solutions applicable to difficult situations. Broadening experiences come from serving in a combination of assignments at the tactical, operational, and strategic level in the Army, in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment, and in assignments that are not military-related. (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 5)

Black, Lynch and Krivelyova (2004) affirmed that a relationship exists between "organizational structure and employment changes and…that some practices… such as the percentage of workers involved in job rotation, are associated with lower employment reductions" (p. 44). Businesses that have modeled their practices on high-performance initiatives such as "employee involvement programs, job rotation, self-managed teams, company-provided training, and incentive-based compensation plans" (Black et al., p. 44) are more efficient, innovative, and productive.

Benefit: Motivation and Morale. The literature contains abundant discussion of issues such as job motivation and employee morale. One question this research attempts to address is how to retain a skilled and resilient civilian workforce when faced with reduced budgets and uncertainty. "Even individuals with strong growth needs cannot respond continuously to the opportunity to perform more and more tasks. At some point, performance turns down as these individuals reach the limits imposed by their abilities and time" (Ivancevichet al., 2014, p. 150). Morale, motivation, and job satisfaction must be considered when discussing retention of civilian employees. The components of job satisfaction include the "nature of the work, coworkers, adequacy of the pay, opportunity for advancement, and supervision" (Mathiset al., 2014, p. 156). "When an employer provides employees with training and development assistance, job satisfaction may increase and employees may be more likely to stay, particularly if they see more future opportunities internally" (Mathiset al., 2014, p. 260).

Benefit: Networking. While interagency rotational assignments are not the specific topic of this research, perspectives offered by the GAO (2012b) provide information relevant to this research because it can be applied to job rotations within organizations or across departments:

Federal government personnel must be able to collaborate across agencies to meet

complex 21st century national security challenges. GAO found in a prior report that

interagency rotations are a type of professional development activity that can help

improve interagency collaboration. However, government officials, policy researchers,

human capital experts, and others cite many challenges to successful rotation programs…

Effective interagency rotational assignments can achieve collaboration-related results—

such as developing participants' collaboration skills and building interagency networks—

but programs must be a "win-win" for the individuals and organizations involved in order

to be effective. (p. 2)

The networking achieved through a partnership between the participant (employee), home or

parent organization, and host organization, as illustrated in Figure 2, creates synergy and

improved communications between and across organizations with the implementation of

rotational assignments.
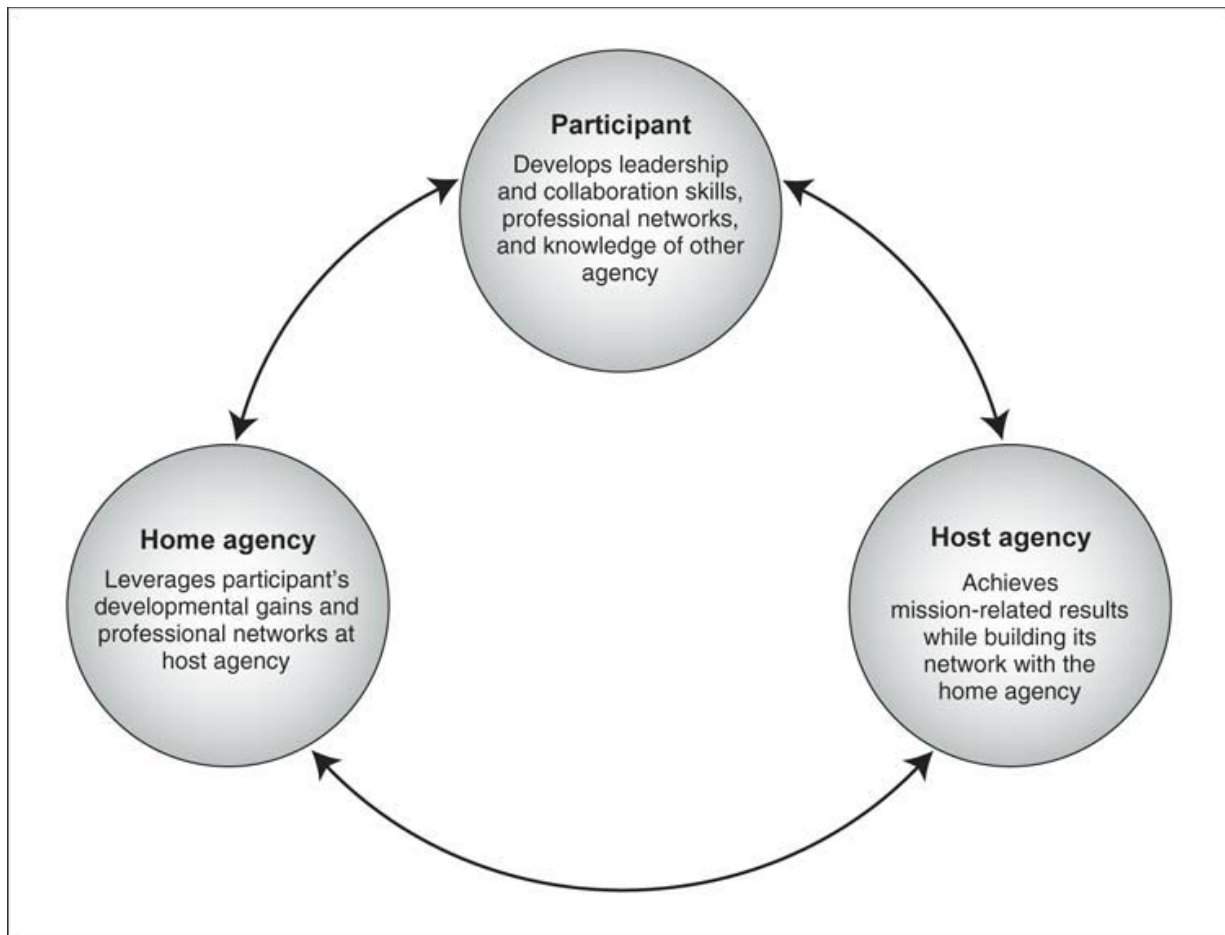
Source: GAO.

Figure 2 – GAO Chart: Rotational Assignment Relationships
(Adapted from GAO, 2012b. p. 7)

Disadvantages and Limitations of Job Rotation

Research and literature present several disadvantages of job rotations in terms of the

impact on the individual employee, the organization, or both. One "disadvantage of job rotation

is that it can be expensive because a substantial amount of time is required to acquaint trainees

with the different people and techniques in each new unit" (Mathiset al., 2014, p. 319). Other

disadvantages include the potential low return on investment without effective selection

arrangements in place (Bennett, 2003, p. 8). Bennett (2003) also found that the considerable

demands placed on the support of the colleagues of participants can "cause resentment where

their support is provided for those they perceive to be members of a privileged group or to be destined for higher things rather than continuing to work alongside them as colleagues" (p. 9). Some limitations on the implementation of job rotation programs in the Government are due to Government regulations that make "hiring, promotion and firing in the public sector far more difficult than in the private sector, limiting flexibility in succession planning. But most government agencies lack the breadth and reach of large corporations" (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2006, p. 7).

The IBM Global Human Capital Study 2008, which performed structured interviews with more than 400 human resource executives, determined that "almost half of the respondents said job rotation was a valuable development technique. However, executives at more than one-third of the companies represented said they find roadblocks to rotation, including reluctance of supervisors to surrender top performers" (Davis, 2008, p. 10). Some "critics state that job rotation often involves nothing more than having people perform several boring and monotonous jobs rather than one" (Ivancevichet al., 2014, p. 151). A *Harvard Business Review* article identified other disadvantages following the review of job rotation models poorly implemented and poorly managed, focused on mobility and broad experience without a strategic view:

> The single-minded pursuit of breadth and destabilized core processes (design, production, marketing) and prevented the development of deep technical expertise. Accountability also suffered as managers constantly overrode their predecessors' decisions and then moved on before having to live through the fallout…. (Nalbantian & Guzzo, 2009)

The foregoing article cautioned that moving young leaders among roles, although an attractive way to increase and improve general management skills, can disrupt operations and have a negative impact on the organization.

In the Senior Executive Service (SES), where rotations are required as part of the employment agreement, "job rotations seem to be widely perceived as punitive and a way for political leaders to get rid of unwanted personnel, rather than a tool for improving one's skill set" (Carey, 2012, p. 18). In reference to job rotation programs, a 2012 GAO report highlighted potential disadvantages to both the individual and the organization such as

> Potential costs to participants' career progression, due to time away from the home agency or other factors…. Potential applicants may fear that they will be 'out of sight, out of mind' while on rotation, and that their performance reviews will not adequately reflect their experiences at the host agency…. Rotation programs, if not managed effectively, can also temporarily diminish the home organizations' Workforce capacities.
>
> (GAO2012b, p. 18)

Comparison and Examples of Job Rotation Programs

Figure 3 illustrates the civilian capabilities framework as provided in the 2013 Army Leader Development Strategy (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013). The same 2013 Army Leadership Strategy portrayed the career development framework for active duty military (as depicted in Figures 4, 5, and 6). The civilian career framework lacks direction, is nonlinear, bundled, and conceptual, while the military career framework portrays a clear flow and necessity for broadening experiences as part of the career development. The contrast between the Army civilian career development framework and the Army military career development frameworks is visualized in Figures 3 through 6. "[S]enior leaders in the military are expected to yield a 'rich array of career development experiences.' Job rotations have the potential to broaden understanding about what might make government more effective [because of exposure to]…different situations and contexts" (Carey, 2012, p. 18).
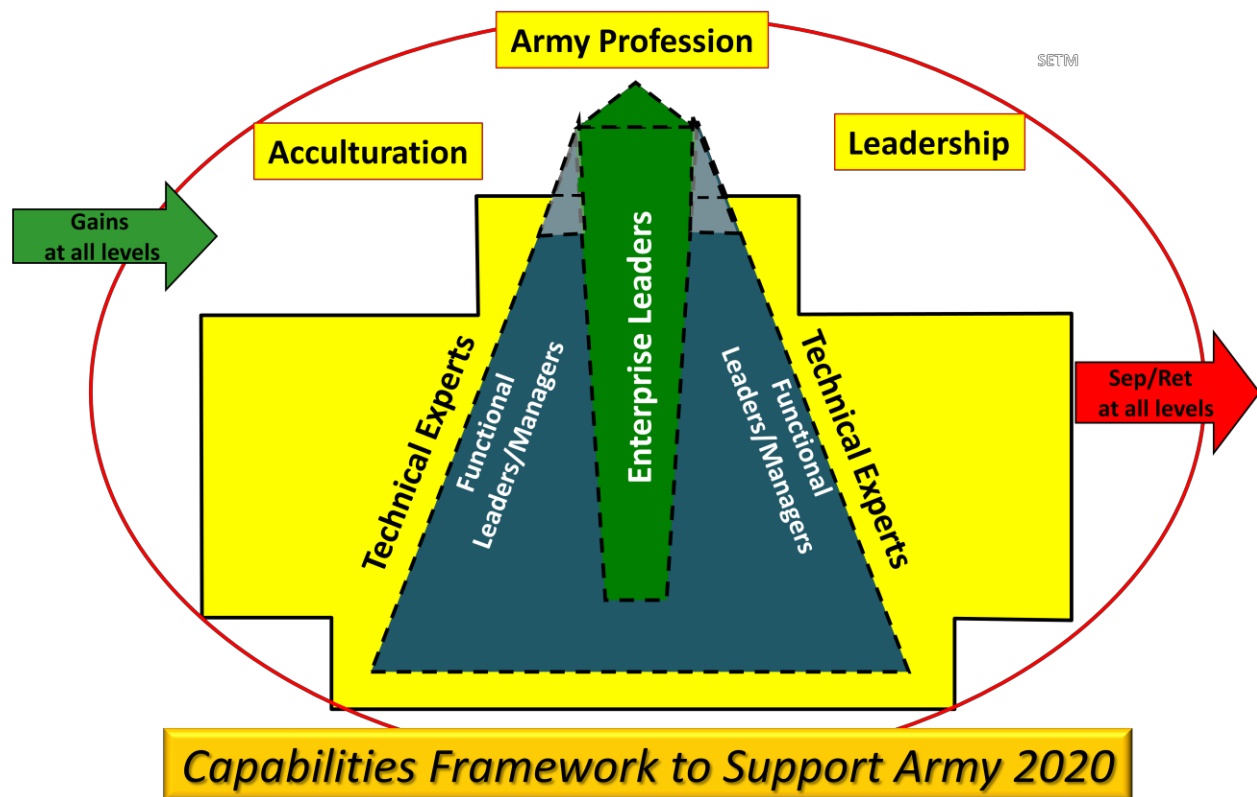
Figure 3 – Civilian Capabilities Framework
(Adapted from U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013. p. 17)

**Example 1: Army Officer, Army Warrant Officer, and Army Noncommissioned Officer**

The Army provides guidance and career planning for military officers, military enlisted, and civilians. The "Officer Cohort Ends and Ways" of the 2013 Army Leader Development Strategy (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013) conjectured that

A broad range of assignment opportunities are available to ensure the purposeful expansion of a leader's capabilities and understanding. These opportunities are internal and external to the Army, occur throughout an officer's career, and provide experiences and education in different organizational cultures and environments resulting in a leader who can succeed at the tactical, operational, and strategic level assignments that allow them to understand areas such as Congress, the Army budget, systems acquisition,

research and development, joint operations, civilian political leadership, industry, academia, foreign militaries, and Army operations as a complex enterprise. (p. 13)

The suggested career path and guidance clearly illustrates the requirement of broadening assignments as part of the career path necessary to be able to address broad, enterprise-wide issues. This same guidance states that "as an integral part of the military team, Army Civilian leaders require a broad understanding of military, political and business related strategies as well as high levels of managerial, leadership, and decision-making skills" (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 16).

As referenced in the "ways" of Warrant Officer development, Warrant Officers are provided "opportunities for leader development…which provide them with additional opportunities for broadening…their technical skills…and assignments that allow them to understand areas such as the whole of government, the Army budget, systems acquisition and research and development" (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 14). The logic behind the Noncommissioned Officer's broadening assignments is that "developmental experiences should start selectively at mid-grade ranks, so that a base of deep understanding is built before these leaders become senior in position and are expected to shape and influence enterprise level dialogue and thought" (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 18). The Uniformed Army suggested career paths include broadening assignments throughout, as illustrated in Figures 4, 5, and 6.
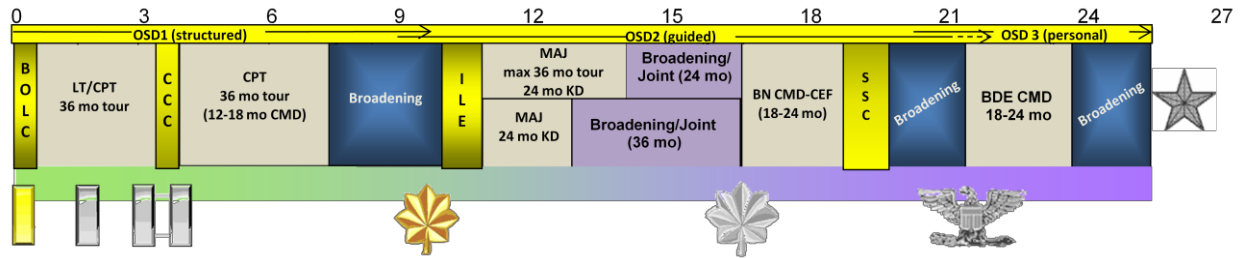
Figure 4 – Officer Career Timeline
(Adapted from U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 13)
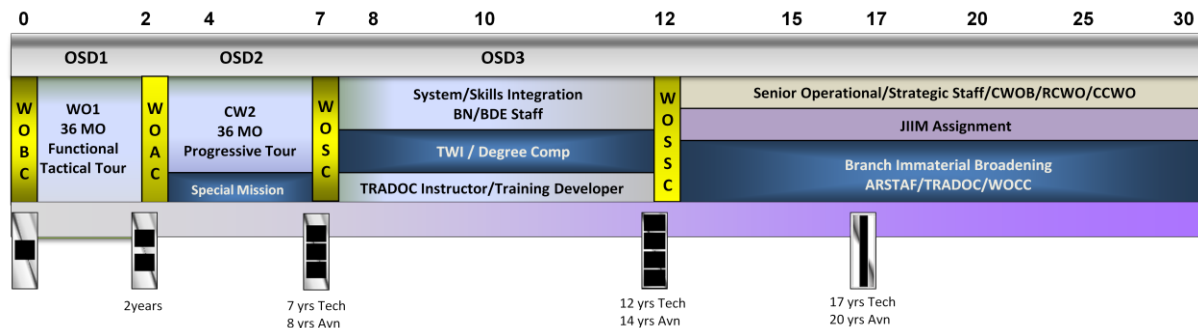
Figure 5 – Warrant Officer Career Timeline
(Adapted from U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 14)
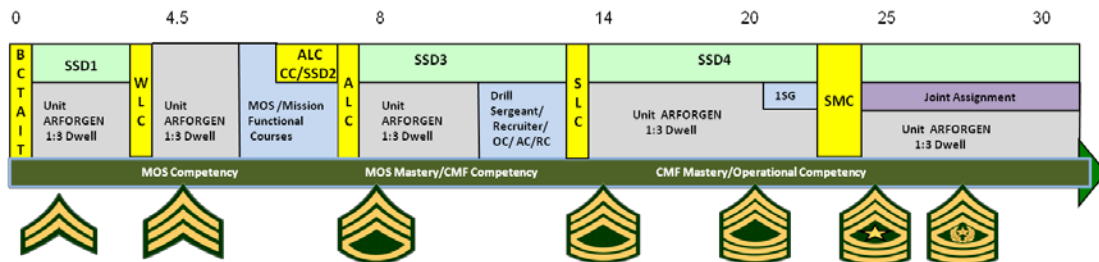
Figure 6 – Noncommissioned Officer Career Timeline
(Adapted from U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 15)

Example 2: Other Government Agencies

Many other Government agencies use rotational assignments to help develop and broaden

their employees. Some examples include the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the

Internal Revenue Service; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; the Department

of Labor; and the U.S. Special Operations Command Special Operations Research, Development and Acquisition. Many organizations within the DoD attempt to implement rotational programs on a small scale. The DHS issued a directive that outlined policy and responsibilities for rotational assignments to address "developmental and organizational needs for [multiple] categories of employees within all DHS Components and the Office of the Secretary" (Schneider, 2007, p. 1), including members of the SES, Transportation, and all department managers and supervisors. DHS implemented this developmental assignment directive to promote a team culture that

> is strengthened by leaders who have diverse experiences in the many facets and missions of the various DHS Components…. The Secretary has identified rotational assignments between the Department and Components to be a key means for fostering greater information sharing and team building. Rotational assignments are one means to obtain depth and breadth of experience while cross-pollinating knowledge, experience and corporate perspective. (Schneider, 2007, p. 4)

The Department of Labor's developmental program includes "rotational assignments, mentoring and promotional opportunities for successful graduates. After engaging in two development assignments, they are expected to take on higher or broader responsibilities within six months of their return to their facility" (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2006, p. 10).

Example 3: Private Sector Companies

Companies such as LG Electronics, IBM, and McDonald's are examples of companies that practice job rotation. "IBM has a tiered approach to leadership development. Even those who do not form part of the talent pool get adequate opportunities through on-the-job experiences and structured development" (Bhattacharya, 2012). In addition, "managers of

organizations such as General Electric (GE), PNC Financial Services, Verizon, Tata Consultancy

Services, Ford, and Deloitte Services LP have utilized different forms of job rotation strategy"

(Ivancevich et al., 2014, p. 151). Further research found that "GE's veritable 'chief executive

greenhouse' is a solid succession planning model deeply rooted in job rotation and mentoring"

(Gale, 2001). "Rotation is typical among companies that emphasize creating well-rounded

general managers, like General Electric. You do not want the CEO and most other high level

executives to be narrow specialists" (Freiberger, 2011). In an interview, Gerald E. Ledford—a

consultant on human capital and job rotation issues for Raytheon, Kimberly-Clark, Braun, Frito-

Lay, and others—commented about job rotation and its benefits:

> The employer gains employees with a broader perspective, more flexibility, and more
>
> capability to solve problems that cross disciplinary boundaries. Employees gain the
>
> ability to do more, increasing their chances of career advancement and, for that matter,
>
> landing a job when necessary. Variety [in] the job, which job rotation produces, has been
>
> shown in literally thousands of academic studies to be associated with work that is more
>
> interesting, motivating, and satisfying for most employees. (Freiberger, 2011, p. 1)

Gale (2001) points out the importance of including broadening opportunities in employee

development plans and company succession plans:

> In larger companies, downsizing has eliminated most of the middle management
>
> positions, which were apprenticeship opportunities for future leaders. Companies don't
>
> always know what job titles will exist in their organization in five years; you can't
>
> develop for a specific job, you have to cultivate the people with leadership potential so
>
> that you've got the talent to fill whatever job opens up.

Companies with proven success and longevity in the marketplace offer best practices in employee development plans. "In *Training* magazine's Training Top 100, 77% of the companies have formal mentoring programs, 66% have job shadowing, and 51% use job rotation…people learning from people" (Barbian, 2002, p. 39).

Grensing-Pophal (2005) wrote an article on job rotation (also termed "job swap") as a part of the Navy Federal Credit Union's executive development program. Job swapping, rotation, and cross-training are terms used interchangeably with the same type of experience in mind— that is, providing employees with "new outlooks, renewed enthusiasm and increased confidence to take back to their 'real jobs'" (p. 50). The assistant vice president of the Navy Federal Credit Union, Betty Kovalcik, corroborated that "an unexpected benefit of the program…[is] an increased awareness of and appreciation for the roles and responsibilities of others. …That allows staff to go back and educate and work together with others and work together to improve processes" (Grensing-Pophal, 2005, p. 52). In addition, Kovalcik stated that job rotations "are pretty mainstream with Fortune 500 companies" (Grensing-Pophal, 2005, p. 52).

Grensing-Pophal's (2005) research conveys the testament of "Lynda Ford, SPHR, president of The Ford Group (www. fordgroup.com), an HR consulting firm, in Rome, N.Y… 'job swapping works best in a culture that encourages risk-taking and innovation and that allows people to make mistakes'" (p. 52), where planning, organization, and communication are critical to successful job rotation initiatives, with the emphasis on planning. Grensing-Pophal provides recommendations on how to implement a job rotation program in an organization. The main elements that Grensing-Pophal's research finds necessary to address in the planning phase are written documents or agreements, identification of "specific criteria for job swappers and a process for selection" (p. 53), mentors, and open lines of communication.

PricewaterhouseCooper LLP (2006) compared best practices in private industry with those of the U.S. Government, and also made some comparisons with best practices in different Government agencies. Their report found that "experts agree that job rotation can serve as an excellent way to build skills and develop talent. In the private sector, job rotation is frequently a key element of leadership development and, indeed, effective succession planning" (p. 12). This report also found that

> There is much that can and must be done at the agency level…. As part of well-crafted succession planning and leadership development programs, innovative practices such as job rotation, leadership development through coaching, mentoring, action learning, and next-generation behavioral performance evaluation must all be considered…. All of these practices, and other methods of identification and tracking of leaders, will be required to increase the speed with which government agencies develop talent and close the widening leadership gap. (p. 2)

Literature Review Conclusion

The literature reviewed for this topic included both supporting and contrary perspectives on the benefits, barriers, advantages, and disadvantages of rotational assignments as a form of employee development. Most literature supports the use of rotational assignments for the benefit of employee professional development and improvement of organizational productivity and innovation. Both in the public and private sectors, literature identified the strategic implementation of rotational assignments as a method of using resources more efficiently and increasing job satisfaction. Based on the results of the literature review, survey questions and interview questions were developed to determine whether the Army acquisition workforce is prepared for or in support of rotational assignments.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to assess current perceptions of job rotations, assess the use and acceptance of job rotations, and assess other organizations and private industry best practices. This research is intended to provide an assessment of only one element of employee development, and it is intended that findings from this research be included with other forms of developmental opportunities to determine the most appropriate combination of developmental alternatives for the maximum benefit of employee morale and retention as well as the maximum benefit to organizational readiness.

Research Hypothesis

Army acquisition civilian employee job rotations could benefit the employee and the organization through improved knowledge and skills, improved retention, improved productivity, or improved innovation and leadership.

Research Process and Design

This research involved a literature review that included a review of research and best practices performed in private industry. Two interviews were conducted with senior-level civilian DoD employees to provide perspectives from leadership with expertise in employee development and leadership. Both interviews were field-focused with open-ended questions; one interview was conducted with a Senior Executive Service member via telephone, and one interview was conducted with a senior DoD civilian employee in person. The intent of the interviews was to capture best practices and "subjective data, such as norms, attitudes, and values" as related to this research topic (Brown, 2011, p. 125).

The survey used in this research was designed to assess senior Army acquisition civilians' perspectives on job rotations and provide professional assessments of the impact of

such developmental programs and practices on the employee and the organization. Responses were anonymous. This study is in the form of cross-sectional research, "one that takes place at a single point in time" (Donnelly, 2008, p. 6). This research included a group-administered Web survey that, unlike an email survey sent directly to the respondent's computer, involves pulling the respondents to a Web site; "this distinction has important implications for how the respondent perceives the survey and for response rates" (Donnelly, 2008, p. 119). The questionnaire was designed with multiple choice, drop down, and open-ended question formats. Page-skip logic was used in question 19. A response of "yes" to this question resulted in full view of and response capability for all questions, while a negative response would skip questions 20–24 and would move the responder to the final survey questions (26 and 27).

Sampling issues involved with the survey questionnaire include available data, accuracy of the list of personnel, and response rates. The types of questions asked in the survey included demographic questions, one filter question, multiple choice questions, and open-ended response questions. Approximately 15% of the sample population, which included all GS-14/15 Government civilian employees assigned to APG, and approximately 20% of the sub-sample including all acquisition GS-14/15 Government civilians at APG responded to the survey. Some possible explanations for unanswered surveys include limited time of the respondents, availability of the respondents, personal inclination to refuse to respond to the survey, and the perception that the survey came from an unreliable source (due to the method and type of survey). With the security issues in place today, some Government employees are not authorized to respond to unencrypted email. The Web site link to this survey was distributed in an unencrypted email to approximately 1,700 GS-14/15 or equivalent Government civilians

assigned to APG. Approximately 1,052 of the 1,700 civilians are coded as Army acquisition civilians on their position descriptions.

Data

Two interviews were conducted with two senior leaders in the DoD with experience with job rotations and who have extensive experience in employee and leadership development. Both of the interviewees shared a primary concern for employee development for the benefit of the employee and for the benefit of the Army and DoD. Responses by both senior level civilian interviewees reflected an interest in innovative ways to get employees to provide a greater contribution to the mission of the DoD.

Data Collection and Analysis

Multiple approaches to data collection were used in this research, including questionnaire data collected from a representative sample of civilian Army acquisition employees and interviews of selected individuals in key leadership positions. Data was also collected from a review of literature from multiple peer-reviewed, academic, and Government databases, books, and files. Attempts were made to retrieve data from multiple Federal human capital and training-and-development offices without success.

From the literature, survey results, and interviews, common benefits, weaknesses, advantages, and disadvantages concerning rotational or developmental assignments were extracted and analyzed. The frequency of common elements, concepts, and perspectives were identified. The survey data collection was managed by SurveyMonkey, a commercial, online product said to be the "world's leading online survey platform…[whose customers] include 99% of the Fortune 500, academic institutions," and other organizations.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The objective of this research is to assess the advantages, disadvantages, and usage of job or position rotations and determine the impact on the individual and the organization and the best use of this development tool. Based on the literature review, survey results, and interview responses, there is a direct correlation between job/position rotations and improved knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employee. There are also direct impacts on employees' understanding of broader concepts and organizational implications, improved employee job satisfaction, improved or extended networks between and within organizations, and improved dissemination and cross-pollination of lessons learned and best practices. Survey results indicate that disadvantages of job rotations include such issues as disruptions to productivity, additional workload to both the host and parent organizations based on learning curves and staffing shortages, and a loss of historical knowledge and mission momentum.

Survey results, literature analysis, and interviews with key DoD senior leaders caution that job rotations should not be used as a "one size fits all" solution and should be used strategically and in tandem with other developmental tools such shadowing, mentoring, coaching, and training. This research supports the existence of such constraints as multiple employee performance and compensation systems, some leaders' negative perceptions of and reluctance to use rotation assignments of their employees, and staffing shortages. These constraints are primary barriers to the acceptance and implementation of rotational assignments on a broad spectrum across the Army acquisition workforce.

The turbulent state of the Army requires that leaders and employees at all levels be prepared for change, so key questions of focus in the interviews revolved around readiness to deal with change, organizational culture, innovation, and teamwork. The first interviewee

provided responses from the perspective of a senior DoD acquisition leader who has extensive experience with employee development and specific direct experience with successful implementation of job/position rotations. The second interviewee provided responses from the perspective of a senior Army leader with extensive experience developing and leading Army civilian employees.

Interview One (November 2014)

Question 1: How have job rotations impacted your Command's ability to respond to change?

> *With a mission requiring the ability to rapidly respond to changes including the rapidly changing needs of the customers and the changing dynamics of the enemy's tactics, the workforce needs to be as flexible and adaptable as the enemy, or our mission will fail. With an organizational culture built on flexibility and adaptability, these core values need to flow from the people through to the customer and the changing environment. If the employee is not comfortable with the level of fast-paced change, he or she may not be in the right element. Not everyone is the right organizational fit for every job or organization.*
>
> *Job rotations help employees resist the conflict of becoming wedded to any one program. The ownership factor is one of the present program or job with an understanding of and appreciation for the overarching big picture, not of a program he has become so attached to that he may be unable to make unbiased decisions. Having a fresh set of eyes on programs, a more objective perspective, helps remove barriers and biases which are naturally developed over long periods of time.*

For example, rotating employees in leadership positions, such as rotating deputies and other senior-level positions, helps develop best practices and spreads these practices across a wider net; big process flow evolves.

If you change people enough, the good stuff will come through; self-serving tendencies will be eliminated, and people will focus on the bigger picture.

Question 2: How has your job rotation program or other developmental program contributed to developing a common culture with increased exposure to and awareness of overarching organizational objectives and goals?

My organization is complex and covers the entire life cycle of acquisition programs and operations. This complexity and all-encompassing organization requires people at all levels and all functions understand how their role fits into the big picture.

A successful leader knows how to lead people from every level from a small group through a brigade. The competitive advantage is obtained by empowering and developing people.

My philosophy is: If you create the workplace of choice, you can attract the best people. Job rotations force people out of their comfort zones. Be honest with employees—tell them if they need improvement in an area. Rotations provide employees exposure to different leadership styles, which helps employees develop while leaders continue developing.

Be an engaged leader—don't own your people; put the leader at the bottom and emphasize that the leader works for everyone else.

Question 3: What types of problems do you see with the implementation of job rotations?

You need to have a long-term view to implement rotational assignments.

Policy attempts have been monolithic and all encompassing, but these efforts have been implemented at one level and not implemented at other grade levels. Guidance states that you can't be an SES, and this will possibly soon apply to GS-15, unless you are willing to relocate geographically.

Even if you are the best expert in the world in a particular field, an employee cannot compete at a higher level with those people who have broad experiences in leadership and with other leaders and organizations (such as retired military officers).

The job market, the housing market, and dual income families all are reasons or disincentives to relocate and disincentivizes units from wanting people outside of the organization, especially with the impact of reduced budgets and policy restrictions on PCS moves. That said, this can be mitigated by assignments such as the Navy War College or other programs that provides new experience for a year without having to relocate.

If someone doesn't want to move to a new assignment or position, tie the move to the strategic reason for the move, and don't back down; do not compromise on the strategic reason and strategic position; that is your credibility and you will eventually achieve buy-in.

Implementing rotational assignments across services is astronomically hard.

Question 4: What are you trying to accomplish with the implementation of job rotations?

The core objective with rotational moves is to create a better "think," increase exposure, and provide more skills.

Retention rates at my organization are high. People who come to this organization love

it; they love the lean and mean environment. We take care of our people, we want people

to continue developing, continue learning and thinking.

The idea that every three years an employee must move is not strategic and not

sophisticated. Don't rotate people just to do it: Make the effort much broader than just a

policy or just your organization.

Development, change, and adaptability apply to all people at all grade levels.

Once a month, leadership looks at all people in the organization. Leaders nominate

people who need to move for one reason or another, and supervisors bring a list of

positions into the meeting for other people to utilize and nominate fills. Within-grade or

lateral moves occur routinely as a result of the monthly meetings.

This organization also implements "exchanges" between different functional elements

and different organizations to the benefit of both the individual and the organization.

Question 5: How do job rotations contribute to innovation and teamwork in your organization?

Technology changes at least every 18 months; we must rotate people to keep pace with

changes in technology.

Exposure to new technology, new programs, and new processes helps create a larger

pool of best practices to draw from in decisions and program implementation.

Our organization has won the Organizational Under Secretary of Defense for

Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Workforce Achievement and Development Award

4 years in a row (2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014). This in itself is a testament to our value of

innovation and teamwork.

Question 6: Are there any lessons learned from job rotations or guidance you can provide for

another organization attempting to implement a job rotation program?

Be careful moving between organizations and locations.

Don't move someone just to move them; make the fit right and make the move for the

right reasons.

Move people functionally or within the larger organization you have if possible.

We rotate 20 to 25% of the organization every year. Supervisors are rated as leaders,

and there is an emphasis in their appraisal on how they develop their people. Hold the

supervisor responsible and accountable if he or she holds onto a person who needs a

broadening experience or wants a broadening experience. We understand that with

rotations there is a learning curve, and we understand there will be some short-term

mission impacts.

Rate the leaders on how they develop people or you will fail in the implementation of the

process. It takes active engagement and commitment.

Everyone buys into it; you must get everyone on board to the idea that change is healthy

and change is necessary for both the individual and the organizational to be successful in

the long term.

Be 100% transparent. Remember always: Lead like you want to be led!

Don't do rotations for "rotation's sake." You need to have a reason to move someone or

the process is counter-productive.

Question 7: What are some barriers to job rotation implementation?

We, as leaders, are not up front with the message to the acquisition workforce

community. A three star is in charge of civilian development; the advocate is a military

member rather than a civilian member, which leads to negative back-pressure and improperly applied strategic context.

Another barrier is the mixed strategic message sent to the workforce. On one hand, the message sent to civilians is "join the Civilian Corps and be the backbone of your organization," emphasizing the role as one of stability for the organization. On the other hand, the message to civilians is that they must broaden their skill sets, network, and knowledge to be competitive for higher positions and to better serve the organization. A mixed strategic message is sent with improper context.

The acquisition certification process doesn't reflect rotational experiences to the advantage of the employee. The current process puts an uncertified acquisition employee at a disadvantage to peers with acquisition certification. The person on a broadening assignment outside of his or her primary acquisition career field is not given career experience credit in their primary field during the period in a rotational assignment, that which is needed for acquisition certification (example: 4 years of logistics experience), even though its purpose is to improve his or her contribution to the acquisition workforce. We should encourage the development of new skills and new experiences, not punish them.

The GS pay system is a barrier to rotations; the GS system makes it difficult to move people around.

Cutbacks and funding reductions on all training and travel should not be an excuse not to develop employees.

Question 8: What are the benefits you have seen to the organization and/or individuals that are attributable to job rotations?

The strategic issue is maintaining a balance between personal growth and organizational growth and stability.

We poorly implement this strategic challenge, and we typically over execute one of the areas (personal growth, organizational growth, or organizational stability), thus not achieving a proper balance.

We moved every deputy PM within a half-day's notice. Now every deputy knows two PEOs, every deputy has experience supervising and mentoring two sets of employees, and employees have exposure to two leadership styles. It's a win-win situation for everyone. Rotations make the organization better aligned.

Job rotations keep employees from becoming complacent, getting stale, and avoid nepotism.

Job rotations smoke out those employees who perform vice those who don't perform.

One new initiative we implemented involving rotations resulted in a new and successful developmental program when people understand the entire organization better after the experience.

Question 9: What are some enablers of rotational assignments?

Enablers of rotational assignments include senior-level intent and context, direct report buy-in, holding people accountable, sensible to needs of the workforce, DoD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project, and generic Position Descriptions.

Interview Two (December 2014)

Question 1: How have job rotations impacted your Command's ability to respond to change?

We have had limited participation in job rotations, but the experience has been positive and enabled employees to respond to different environments, engage with different people, deal with different challenges, and to stretch their skills and knowledge of Army processes in the context of change while responding to change.

As part of the agreement established for the rotational assignments, coaching needs to be an integral part of the process.

Coaching is the key to making any change stick.

Question 2: How has your job rotation program or other developmental program contributed to developing a common culture with increased exposure to and awareness of overarching organizational objectives and goals?

By sending employees to similar, but not identical, mission areas within the Army, employees are able to see how missions are executed from different perspectives. These opportunities provide a very good learning experience. Employees bring back lessons learned, recommendations to improve or continue processes, and provide tremendous value from seeing processes and procedures that didn't work through exposure to different workplaces, missions, and different areas of emphasis.

Having a dedicated workforce development center contributes to increased sharing and collaboration across organizations on the installation. Through networking and opportunities such as rotational assignments which increase networks, employees share resources, training opportunities, and other services with other organizations in a synergistic effort that works to promote long-term relationships between organizations or departments and makes the most efficient use of training facilities, resources, and opportunities.

While job rotations have not yet received significant buy-in across the organization or the community, there is an initiative to develop criteria and processes in addition to memorandums of agreements to assist with the implementation of developmental assignments and provide the tools necessary for success.

Question 3: What types of problems have you realized with the implementation of job rotations?

The biggest problem I have encountered is buy-in and getting supervisors and managers to realize the benefit and their roles as supervisors in implementing rotational and developmental assignments.

Supervisors and managers don't realize that they play a significant role in the planning and implementation process of employee development.

Supervisors don't always see rotational opportunities as a viable option or an available option at all. No one inquires about job rotation opportunities, so some possible conclusions that could be drawn include supervisors don't know about the rotational opportunities or don't want to use rotational opportunities.

Question 4: What are you trying to accomplish with the implementation of job rotations?

Job rotations provide employee development, individual and organizational growth, and a benefit to the organization and to the Army. Different perspectives and "new blood" bring change, but the problem is that people in the organization are threatened by this change and by the concept. When an employee undertakes a rotational assignment, he or she is like an ambassador of the parent organization, the partnering organization, and the job rotation program. Rotational or developmental assignments provide value and lead to relationships that would not have otherwise existed.

You, as a supervisor, know who should be developed, or at least you should be aware of those who have potential and can provide even greater value to the organization through developmental opportunities. Money is one driver in limiting who we select for developmental opportunities, but criteria such as length of time in position, demonstrated performance, and other factors must be taken into account. The Army needs supervisors and managers to identify areas where we should invest Army dollars.

Some people just don't want to be managers or supervisors, and this is one reason why plans for individual development need to be tailored through open and regular communication between the supervisor and the employee.

It is the job of Army leaders to have those critical conversations with supervisors and managers and reinforce their responsibility to develop their employees.

Supervisors and managers need to be coached on how to develop their employees and promote a culture that supports development. Due to restraints of time and money, this would likely be best performed in a group setting.

Question 5: How do job rotations contribute to innovation and teamwork in your organization?

Rotational assignments result in new ideas coming into the organization, and things that didn't work are identified and shared across organizational lines. Supervisors and managers are threatened by something new such as a change in culture or movement and change in personnel.

Most people are selected as supervisors based on their technical expertise, and they don't know how to think as a leader and take a role that emphasizes developing employees. Because employees are typically selected for supervisory or managerial roles based on technical expertise, without consideration of their leadership abilities and people skills

(soft skills), they may have no interest in developing employees (that's not their area of expertise); or they may not care about developing employees because they don't see that as an inherent function of their role or part of their responsibility in their position.

Question 6: Are there any lessons learned from job rotations or guidance you can provide for another organization attempting to implement a job rotation program?

Job rotations and developmental opportunities are not utilized enough in our organization and community.

Question 7: In your opinion, what is the optimal time to remain in one position?

The optimal time for a developmental/rotational opportunity varies depending on many factors; there is not an optimal time or "one size fits all" approach that is appropriate in all situations. The length of time depends on the life cycle and what you want to get out of the opportunity. A rotational assignment should be no less than six months, but the critical factor is flexibility because the assignment should be able to adapt to meet the needs of the individual and the organization. The rotational assignment should be able to be extended if more time is needed to get the full benefit out of the opportunity, or shortened if the assignment is not working or is not a good match for either the individual or the organization. If the job is very technical, a longer developmental assignment would be necessary. As one of the individuals who had the opportunity to participate in a rotational assignment explained, 12 months or longer is optimal to achieve the maximum benefit out of the experience and provide the greatest value to the Army.

Question 8: How do job rotations make employees more valuable to the organization?

The greatest part about rotational assignments is that it doesn't cost anything to try it. The return on investment is exponential.

Job rotations provide new experiences, challenges, and strengthen the individual and the organization. Supervisors and managers need to use established and evaluated criteria in the selection and implementation of assignments. If the assignment isn't working, the program needs to be flexible enough to pull the employee back to the parent organization and terminate the assignment. Positions do not need to be identical if an exchange or swap is implemented.

Question 9: What are the benefits you have seen to the organization and/or individuals that are attributable to job rotations?

Employees with broader experience and awareness are perceived as more valuable. There has been concern about what to do if an employee likes the rotational position and wants to stay. The employee needs to be viewed as an Army employee and not your own employee. Supervisors and managers need to stop thinking about their own work and look out for the best interests of the Army. While supervisors and managers see rotational assignments of their employees as an inconvenience to them, they need to adopt a new and broader view of what is best for the employee and the larger organizational construct.

Question 10: Has your organization's retention improved with the implementation of job rotations?

Our organization lost an employee to another organization due to job rotations, but that didn't bother me. It was what was best for the employee and what was best for the Army. Employees need people and leaders to support them in their career progression and development and encourage broadening and cross-pollination of their talent to other organizations in the Army.

Rotational assignments should be part of the development of all employees, to include

managers and supervisors.

Switching or rotating managers, division chiefs, and supervisors is possible in most

situations, and we can find a way to make this work. Rotational assignments provide new

challenges for employees who may have fallen into a rut. Employees may develop a

renewed appreciation for how good they have it, and changing leaders helps provide

organizations with new ways of looking at how the Army conducts its business.

Population and Sample Size

Survey responses were anonymous, and while the target population was GS-14/15 Army

acquisition civilians assigned to APG, approximately 60 respondents were GS-14/15 Army

civilians in nonacquisition positions, and seven respondents indicated they were in grade levels

below GS-14. Demographic questions allowed respondents to be filtered by grade and

acquisition or nonacquisition position. Comparing results of all respondents (including

nonacquisition employees) with the acquisition-only responses showed no significant difference

in the percentages of any nondemographic question. The benefit of capturing a large quantity of

nonacquisition senior Army civilian responses is that the results of this research can be applied

or used to address a larger-scale Army population; recommendations and conclusions from this

research can be applied across the Army community.

Survey Results

The survey results reported in this research include responses from 202 acquisition

civilians in the APG community in the grades of GS-14/15 or the equivalent pay band grade.

There were a total of 277 respondents to the survey, and 202 of the respondents identified

themselves as acquisition civilians in the grades of GS-14 or GS-15 or the equivalent pay band

grade. Sixty-two respondents identified their status as nonacquisition Army civilians in the grades of GS-14 or GS-15 or the equivalent pay band grade. The complete survey instrument is included as Appendix A, and survey results filtered to include all GS-14/15 or equivalents (both acquisition and nonacquisition) is included as Appendix B. Because the focus of this research is on Army acquisition employees, the findings below are representative of responses as indicated in the survey filtered for GS-14/15 or equivalent acquisition employees.

Figure 7 depicts survey question 3 results, which indicate that 80% of the civilian Army acquisition GS-14/15 or equivalent respondents have served more than 10 years as Federal Government civilian employees. Stated conversely, 20% or one-fifth of the civilian Army acquisition GS-14/15 or equivalent respondents have served less than 10 years as Federal Government civilian employees. From this point forward, senior acquisition civilian respondents will be the terminology used to describe the survey results as a part of the findings in this research.
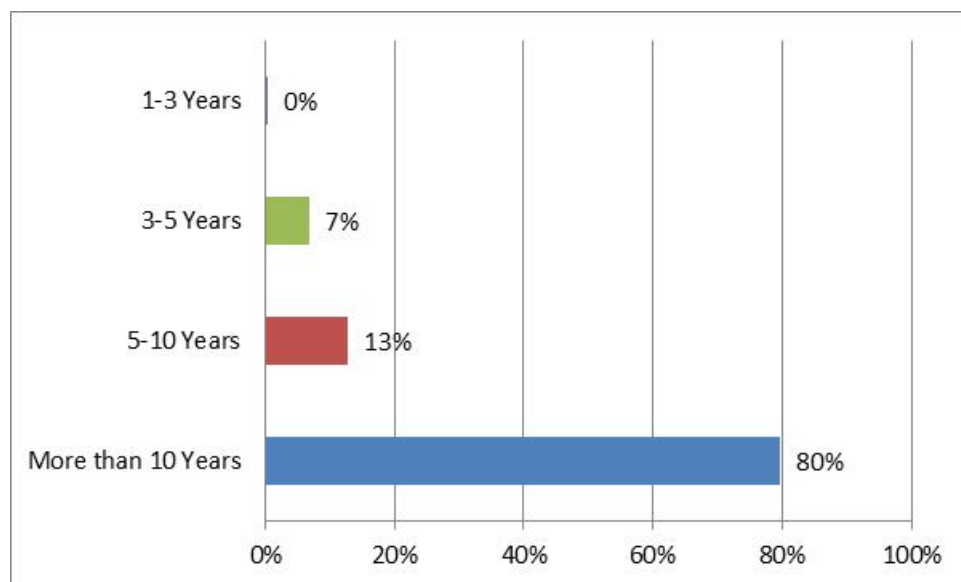
Figure 7 – Survey Question 3

While 15% of the total senior acquisition civilian respondents have served in one to two positions during their careers as shown in Figure 8, only 12, or 7.5% of the senior acquisition civilian respondents have held only one or two positions and have greater than 10 years civil service (Figure 8). Of the 43% of senior acquisition civilian respondents indicating each has served in more than five positions in their Government civilian service career (Figure 8), 41% of the total respondents have served more than 10 years as a Government civilian. Analysis of these results was facilitated by filtering on the results of questions 3 and 4.
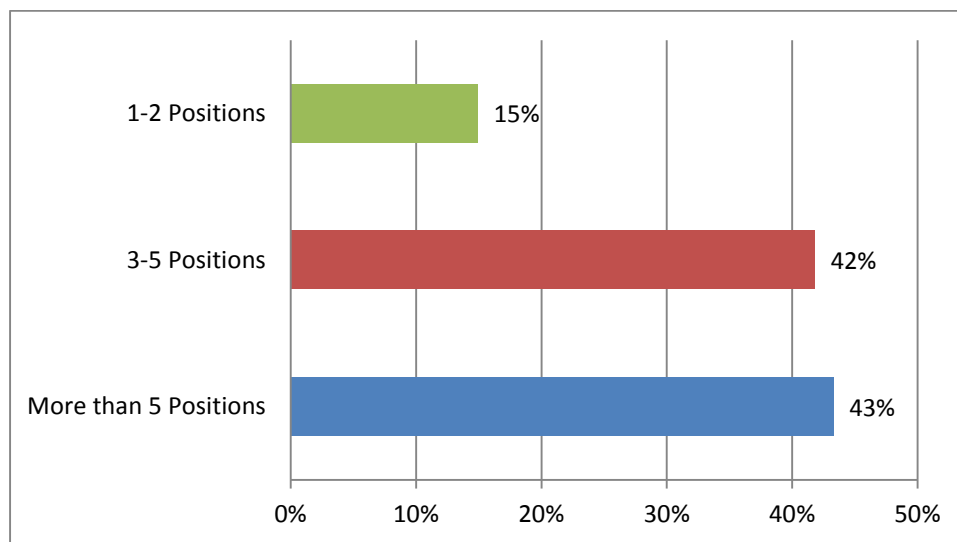
Figure 8 – Survey Question 4

Of the total 202 senior acquisition civilian respondents, 85 have remained with their organization for more than 10 years. Of the 42% serving more than 10 years in one organization, as represented in Figure 9, 15% have served in one or two positions; 40% have served in three to five positions; and 45% have served in more than five positions.
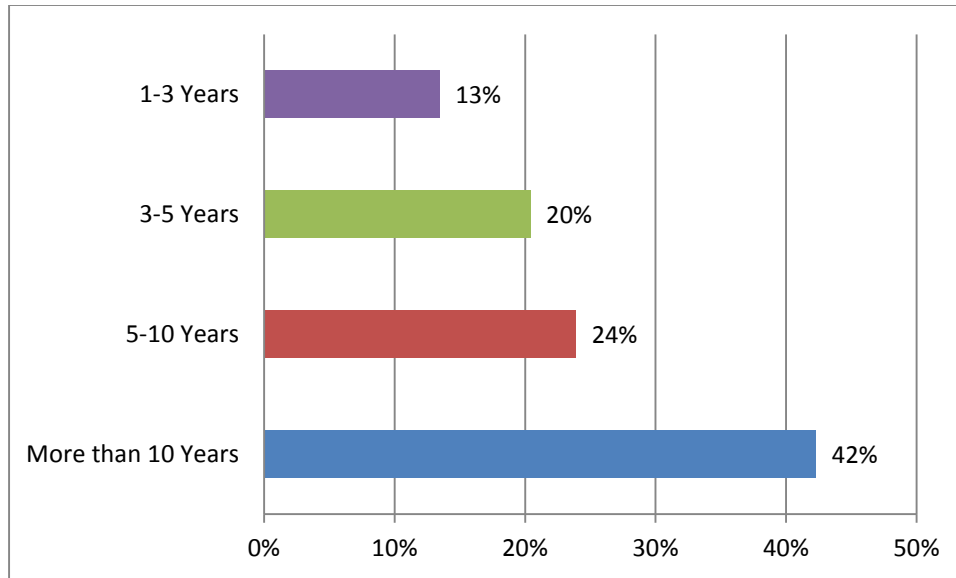
Figure 9 – Survey Question 6

While the literature review was unable to reveal an optimal time to remain in one job or position, 64% of survey respondents imply that 3 to 5 years is the preferred length to remain in one position as represented in Figure 10. This survey included GS-14/15 respondents, and GS-14/15 civilian employees are composed primarily of "Generation X" (people born roughly between 1965 and 1979) and Baby Boomers (people born roughly between 1946 and 1964). The employees replacing "Generation X" and Baby Boomers are Millennials; "ninety-one percent of Millennials (born 1977–1997) expect to stay in a job for less than three years.... That means they would have 15–20 jobs over the course of their working lives" (Meister, 2012, p. 1).
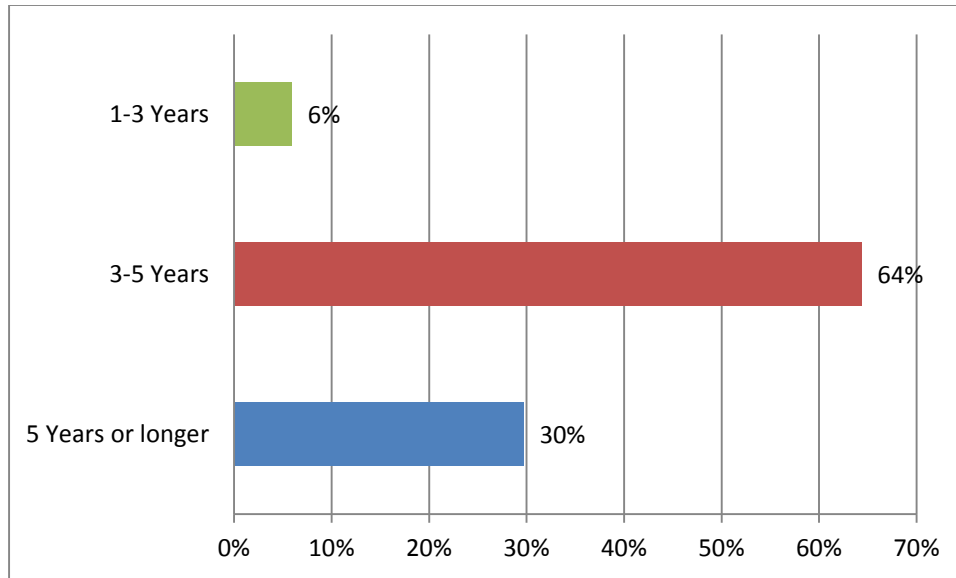
Figure 10 – Survey Question 7

Figure 11 indicates 12 months to 2 years is the optimal time to remain in a rotational or developmental assignment to achieve the maximum benefit of the experience. This finding indicates an assignment less than 12 months or greater than 2 years will not be as effective. The conclusion drawn from this survey question could be further expanded to infer that rotational assignments for 3- to 6-month periods are not beneficial to the employee or the organization.
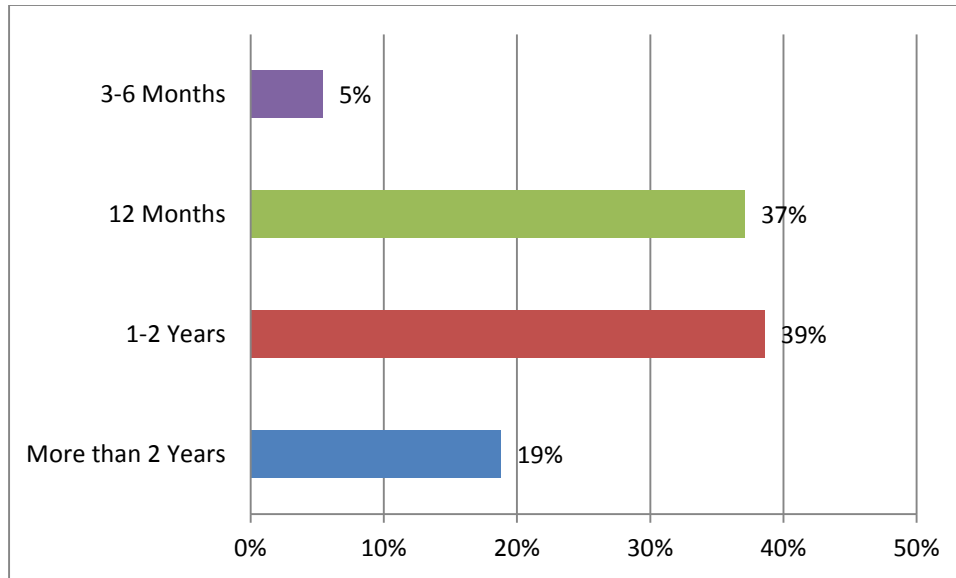
Figure 11 – Survey Question 8

Over 50% of the senior acquisition civilian respondents indicated that rotational assignments will not decrease performance quality and productivity. Contrarily, 48% of senior acquisition civilian respondents either agreed with or were neutral to the concept that performance quality and productivity will decrease with rotational assignments in the Army acquisition workforce. Almost one-quarter of the senior acquisition civilian respondents believe rotational assignments will have a negative impact on performance and productivity as depicted in the survey results in Figure 12.
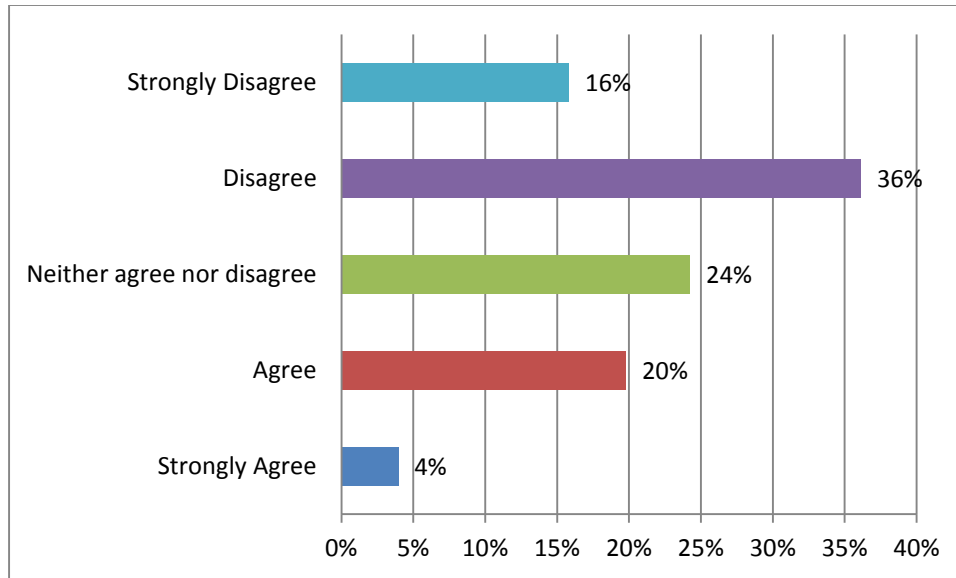
Figure 12 – Survey Question 9

Survey results lead to the finding that a majority of the workforce assessed that job rotations or developmental opportunities will increase retention of employees. Some of the reasons supporting this can be found in Table 1. Figure 13 illustrates a majority in agreement that retention rates will benefit from broadening experiences and opportunities for civilian government employees.
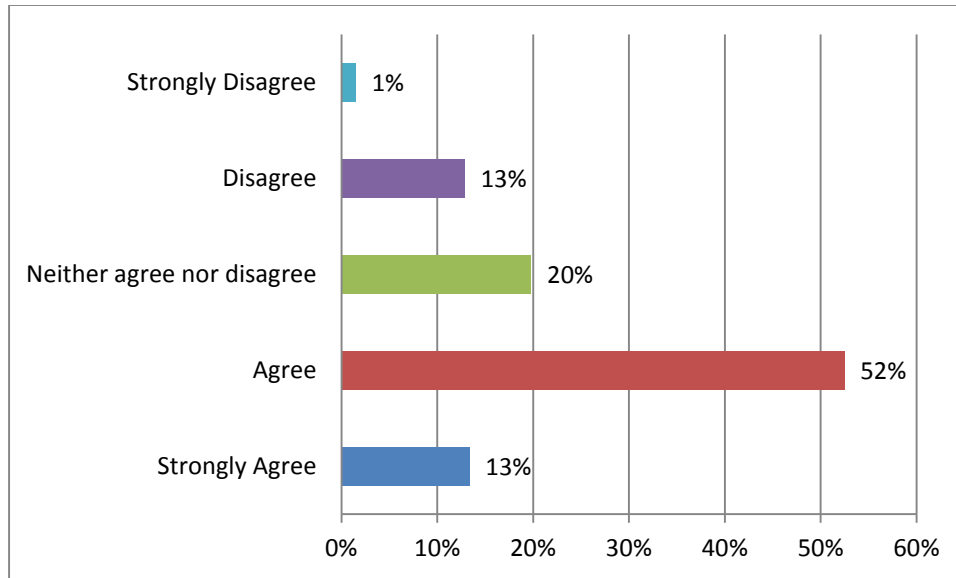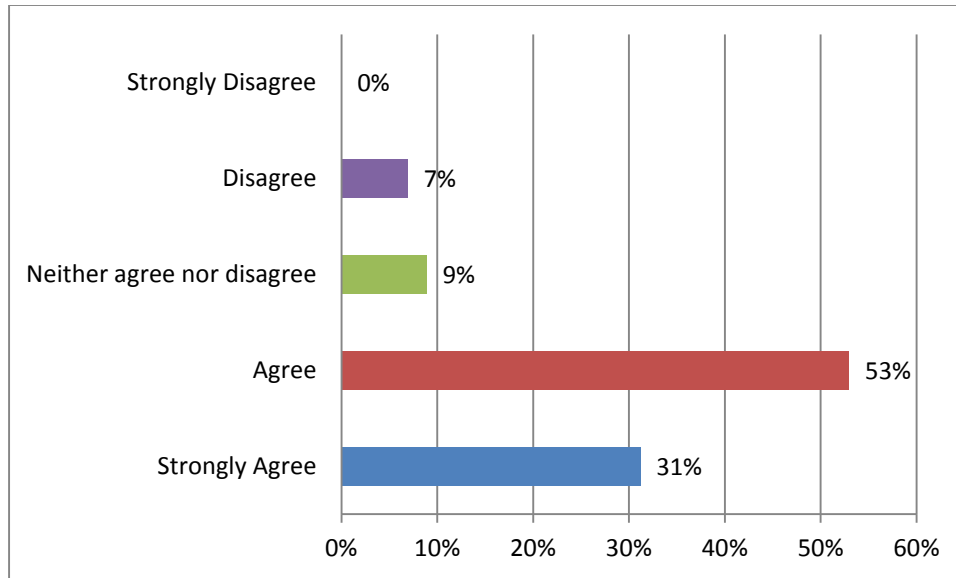
Figure 13 – Survey Question 10

Figure 14 depicts the divide between senior acquisition civilian respondents in their assessment of the supervisor's role and variations of professional opinion of support for rotational assignments for subordinates. The results could be based on different interpretations of this survey question. Twenty-five percent of the senior acquisition civilian respondents were neutral in their response, and this neutral response could mean that some respondents may be supportive of job rotations whether or not the employee returned to their organization, while other respondents may have provided a neutral response due to other factors, such as degree of involvement with employee development, perceived influence over employee development, or other reasons.
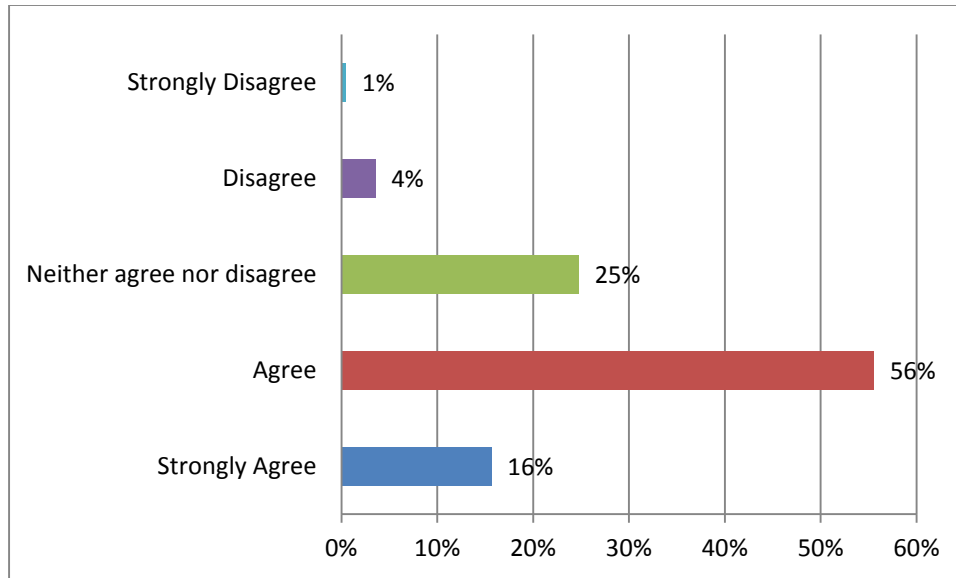
Figure 14 – Survey Question 11

As indicated in Figure 15, 84% of senior acquisition civilian respondents indicated that participation in a rotational assignment would increase their individual value to the Army. This was one of only two survey questions that had zero responses in the "strongly disagrees" category. This finding strongly supports senior acquisition civilian support of rotational assignments as a means of providing greater value to the Army enterprise.
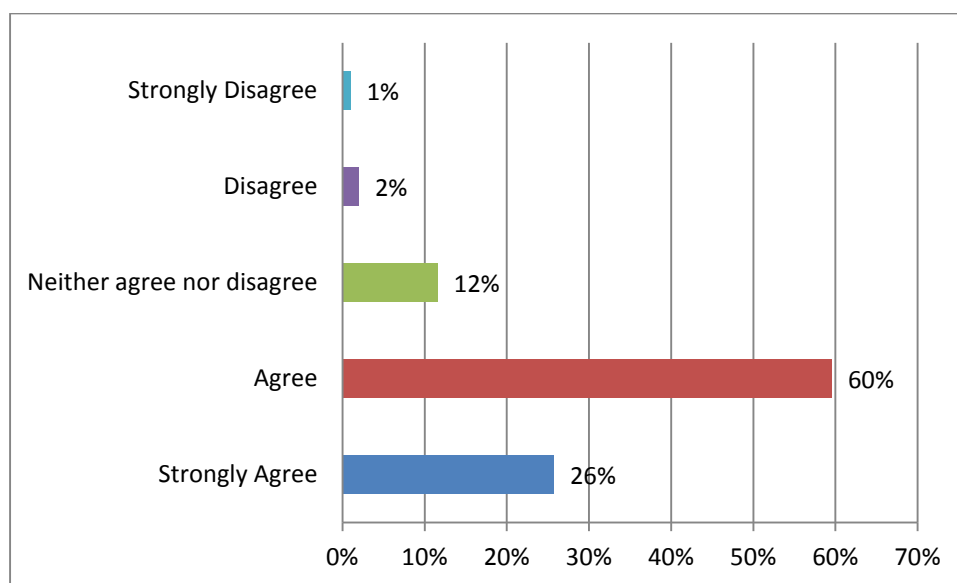
Figure 15 – Survey Question 12

Senior acquisition civilian respondents agreed that rotational or developmental assignments enhance professional development. Figure 16 reflects that 91% of senior acquisition civilian respondents are in agreement with this statement.
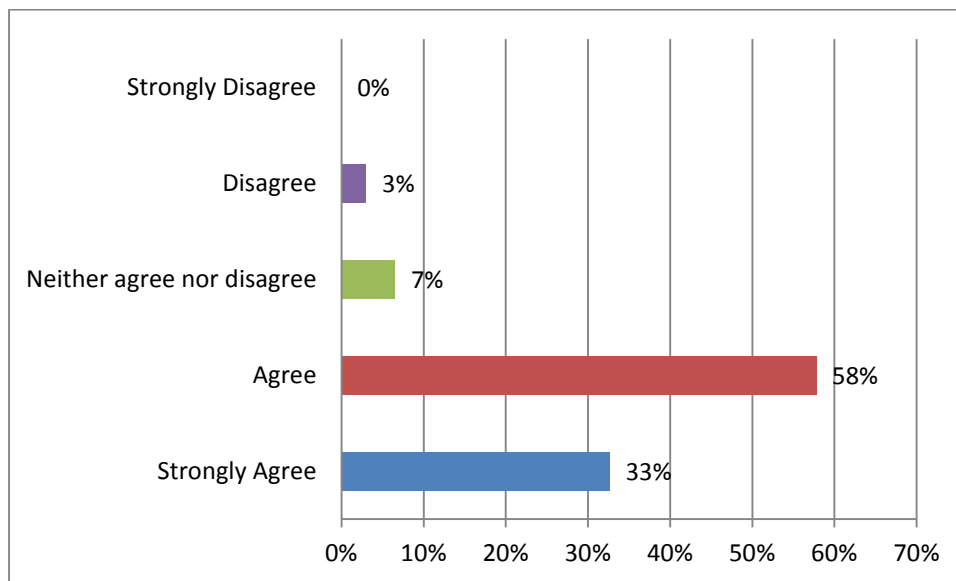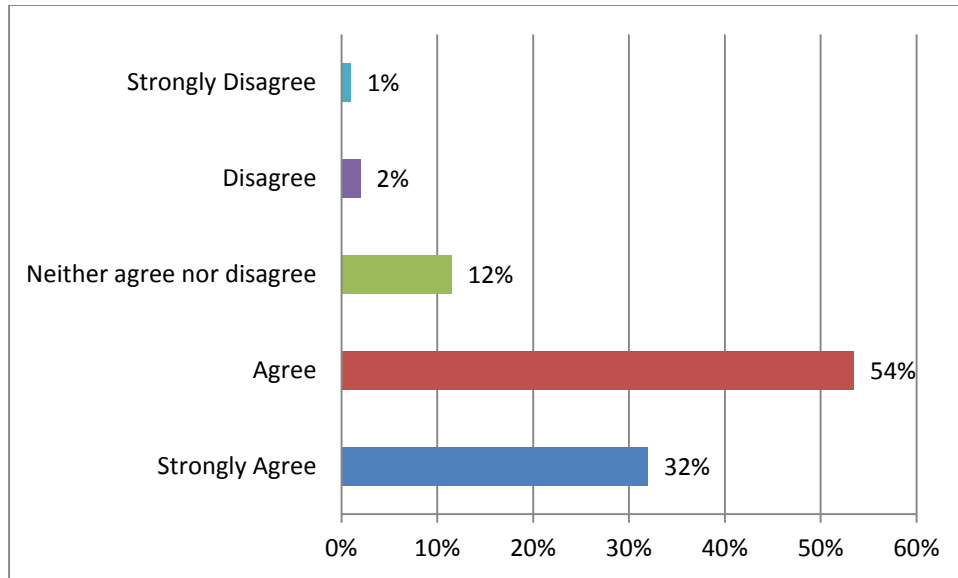

Figure 16 – Survey Question 13

Figure 17 reveals 86% of the senior acquisition civilian respondents would be more supportive of job rotations if a swap or replacement were included as an exchange rather than a one-way initiative. There is strong support for exchange or swap programs as an opportunity for broadening employee knowledge and understanding of the acquisition structure and processes. Swaps, or a one-for-one exchange of employees across or within organizations, are reportedly supported from a managerial perspective in the strategic shaping of the organization.

Figure 17 – Survey Question 14

According to the data in Figure 18, 86% of senior acquisition civilian respondents would support developmental opportunities for themselves if a return to their parent organization or to a position of equal or greater responsibility were assured in advance.
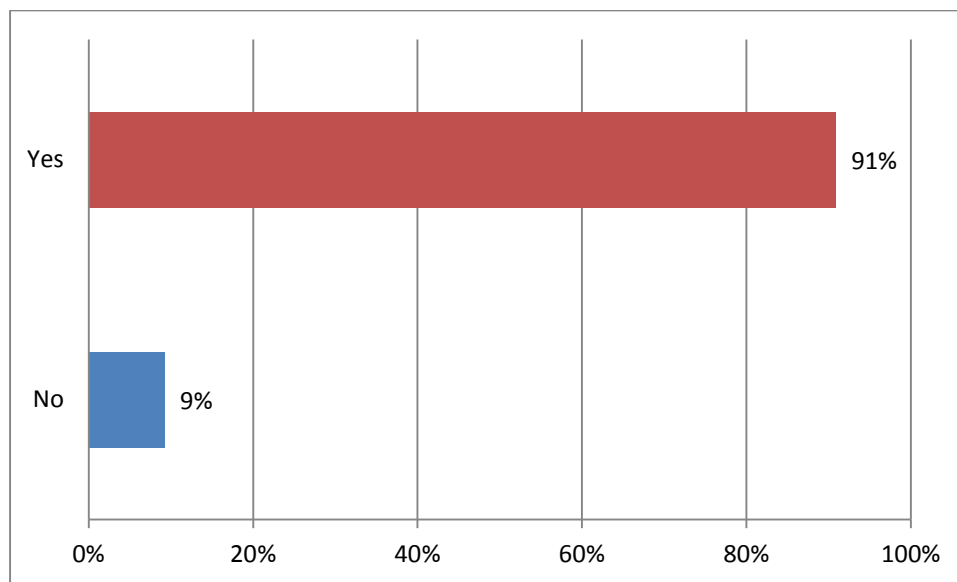
Figure 18 – Survey Question 15

Figure 19 illustrates that approximately one-quarter of leadership in the respondents' Army acquisition organizations does not support or promote job rotations, while three-quarters of leadership in the same pool does support and promote this developmental activity.
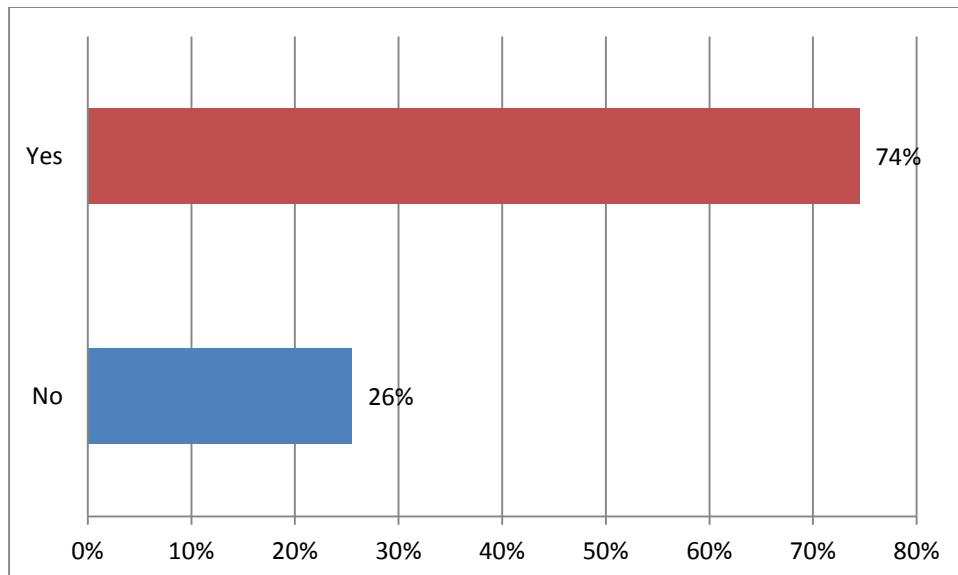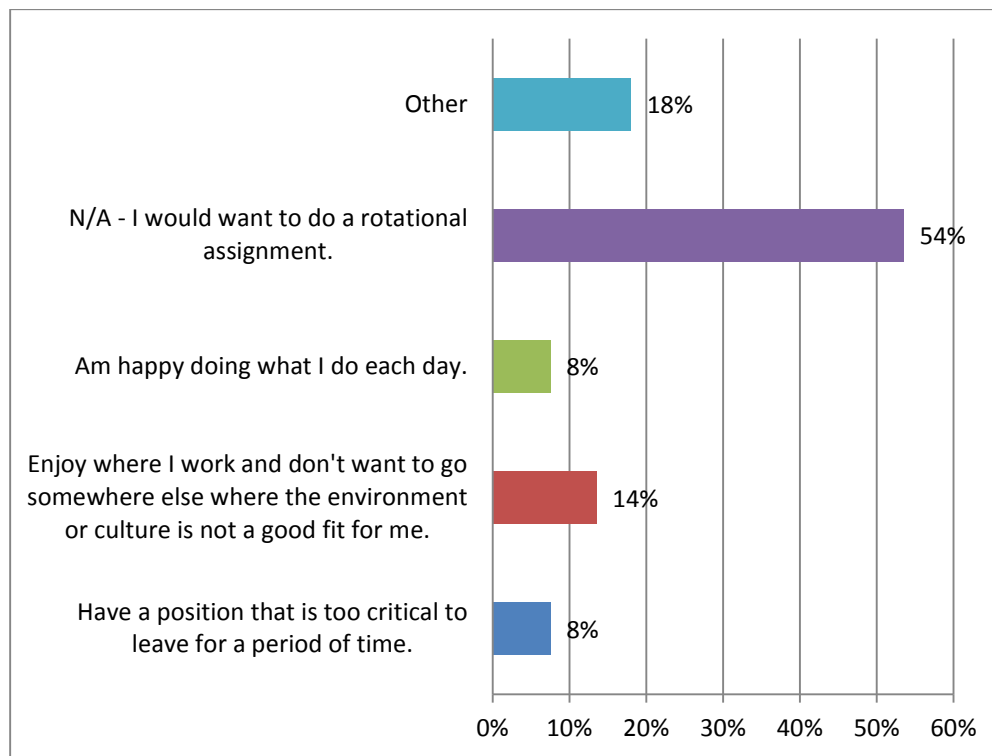

Figure 19 – Survey Question 16

Figure 20 reports that senior acquisition civilian respondents overwhelmingly supported and encouraged job rotations and developmental of their subordinates. Only 9% of respondents indicated that they do not support rotational assignments of their employees. This relationship is inconsistent with the results found in Figure 19. Further research into the interpretation of "leadership" in survey question 16 is required to elucidate the inconsistency between the results shown in Figures 19 and 20. One finding based on the responses to questions 16 and 17 is that not all of the senior acquisition civilian respondents consider themselves part of "leadership" in their responses to question 16, even though all senior acquisition civilian respondents are in the grades of GS-14/15 or equivalent.

Figure 20 – Survey Question 17

As shown in Figure 21, 54% of senior acquisition civilian respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating in a rotational assignment; 22% were either happy where they are or didn't want to go somewhere that may be a poor fit; and 8% indicated their jobs are too critical to leave for a developmental experience. The 18% who responded to the "other"

category is evaluated in connection with Figure 22, which captures the major categories of narrative responses to the "other" category.

Figure 21 – Survey Question 18

Survey question 18 contained an option for a narrative and unrestricted response as to why the respondent would not want to participate in a rotational assignment. Thirty-six responses were provided to the "other" category. For the purpose of presentation and analysis, I grouped the 36 responses to "other" into five major categories as identified in Figure 22. Of the 36 responses, 47% said they would not be interested in a rotational assignment because they are close to retirement. Eighteen percent indicated that there is either no perceived value to doing such an assignment or there is a risk of not having a job to return to on completion of the developmental opportunity. An additional 15% indicated that their job is too critical for them to leave. When this 15% of "other" category, which captures 18% of the total pool of respondents

captured in Figure 21, is added proportionately to the 8% of senior acquisition civilian respondents who indicated their job is too critical in Figure 21, the total percentage of respondents who consider their current position too critical to leave for a period of time is 10% of the total senior acquisition civilian respondents.
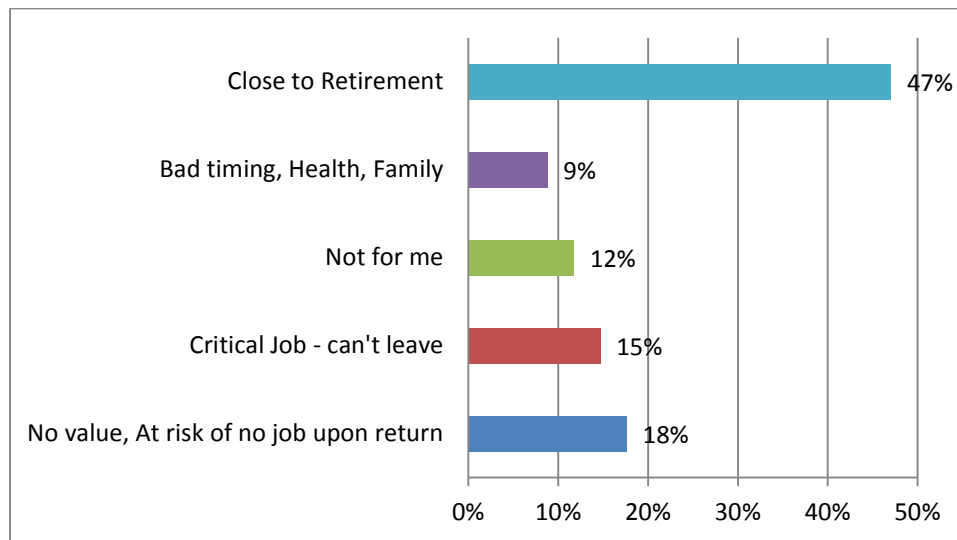

Figure 22 – Subset of Survey Question 18

Over 68% of respondents indicated that their organization currently uses some form of job rotation or developmental assignment for the purpose of broadening knowledge, skills, and abilities as represented by the graph in Figure 23. Question 19 used "page-skip logic." A positive response resulted in the respondent progressing to questions 20–27, while a negative response resulted in the respondent's transfer to the final two survey questions (questions 26 and 27). Those who answered no to question 19 did not provide a response to questions 20-25. The 68% of senior acquisition civilian respondents who do work with an organization that implements some type of rotational assignment represents 134 respondents' responses.
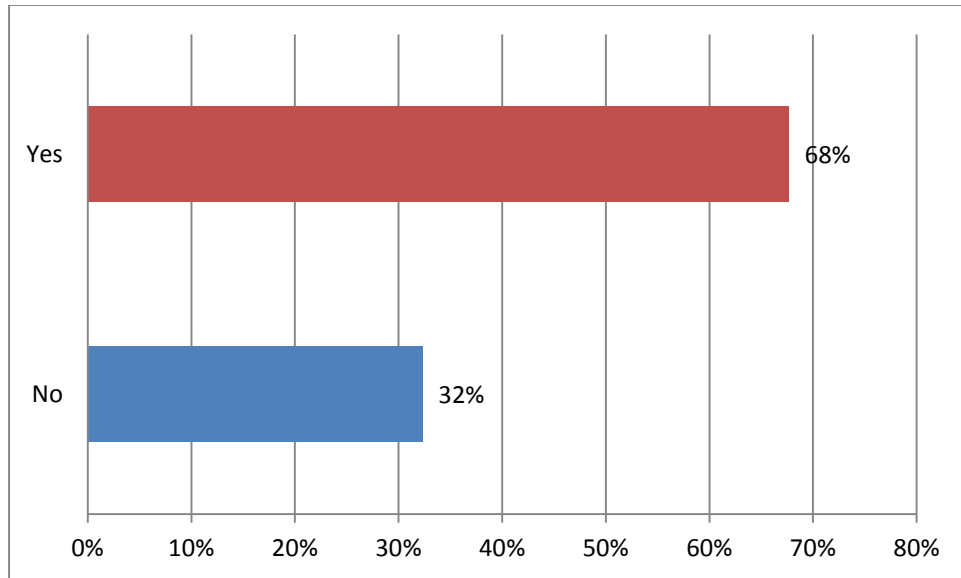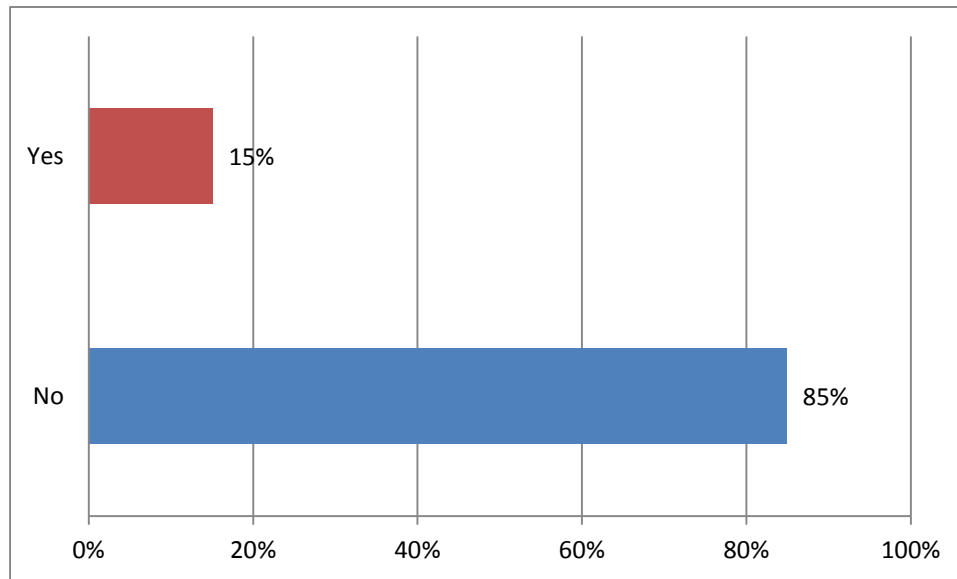
Figure 23 – Survey Question 19

Of those who responded affirmatively to question 19, 34% have seen a positive change in morale after the implementation of job rotations in their organization, as depicted in Figure 24. Sixty-two percent of respondents have not perceived any change in organizational morale attributed to job rotations.
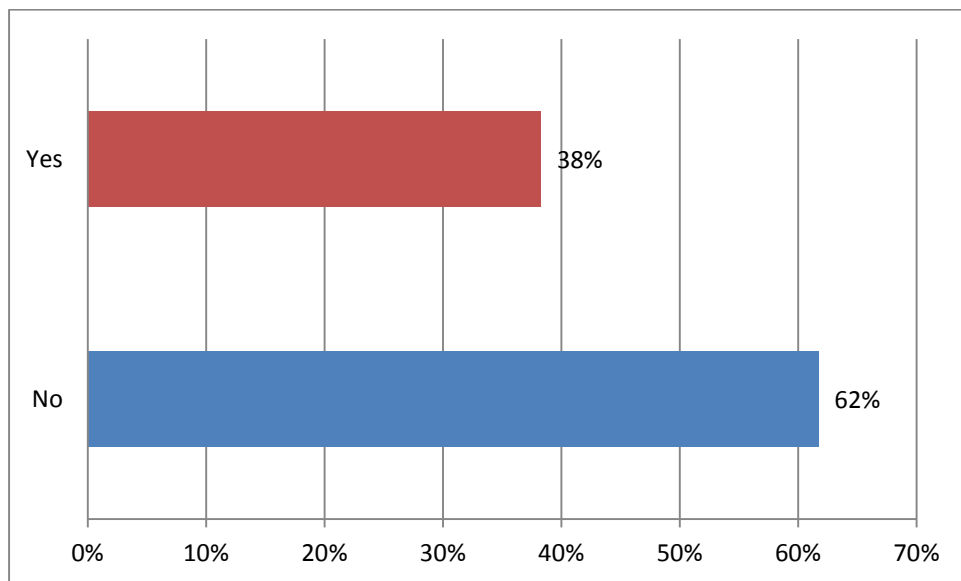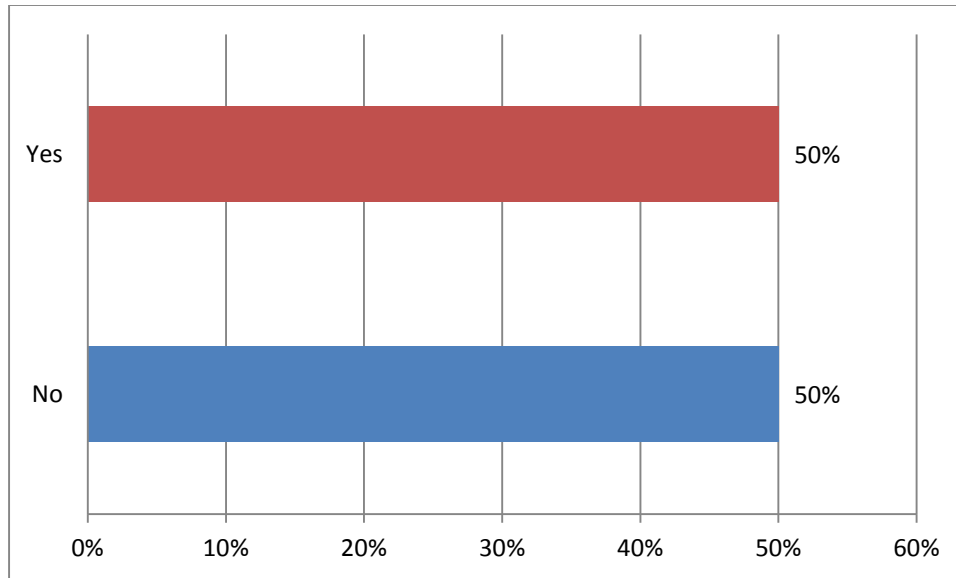

Figure 24. Survey Question 20

Responses to question 21, as depicted in Figure 25, indicate that job rotations in the

Army acquisition civilian workforce have not contributed to a decrease in voluntary departures.

According to this survey, job rotations and similar developmental assignments are not directly

related to retention rates.

Figure 25 – Survey Question 21

Exactly half of senior acquisition civilian respondents attributed an increase in workload

to job rotations, while the other half of the same population did not make this correlation. This

relationship is illustrated in Figure 26.

Figure 26 – Survey Question 22

Of the 127 senior acquisition civilian respondents who are in an organization practicing some form of job rotation, 78, or 61% (Figure 27) have taken lessons learned or best practices from one organization or department back to their original assignment and implemented the best practice.
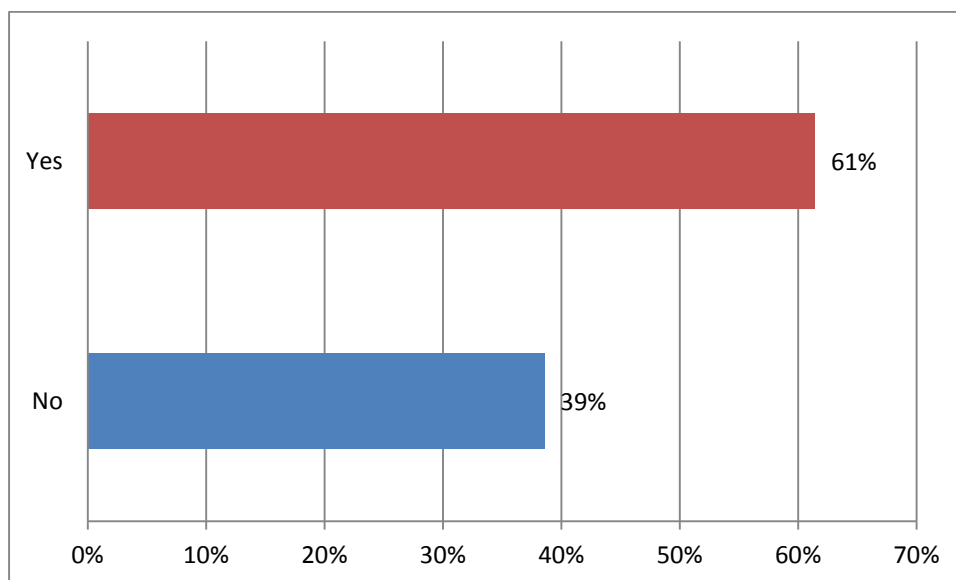
Figure 27 – Survey Question 23

The respondents were split 50%/50% (Figure 28) as to whether or not rotational or developmental assignments contributed to their organization's ability to deal with change.
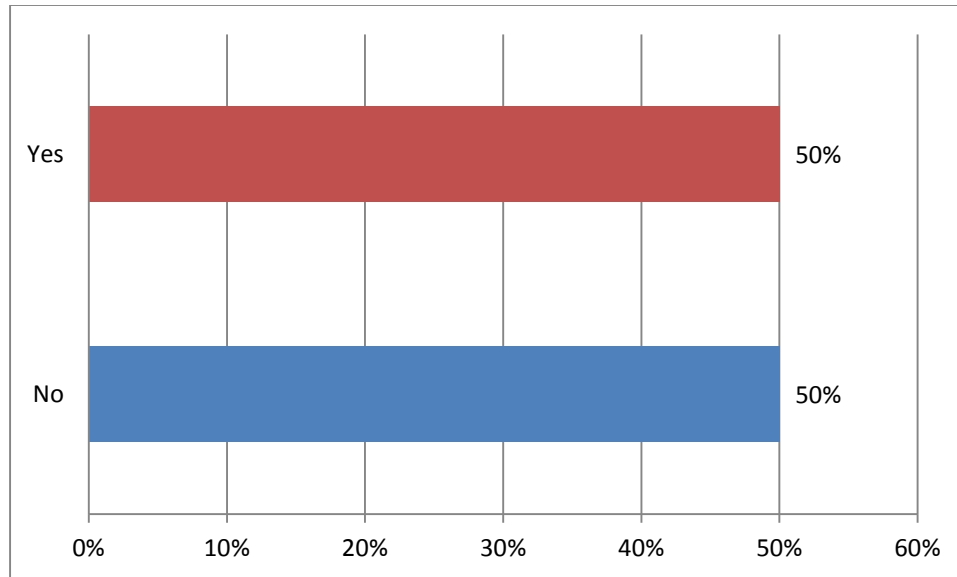
Figure 28 – Survey Question 24

More than three-quarters of the respondents to question 25 (Figure 29) linked decreases in productivity to rotational or developmental assignments. One-quarter of the same population did draw a connection between job rotations and decreases in productivity within the organization.
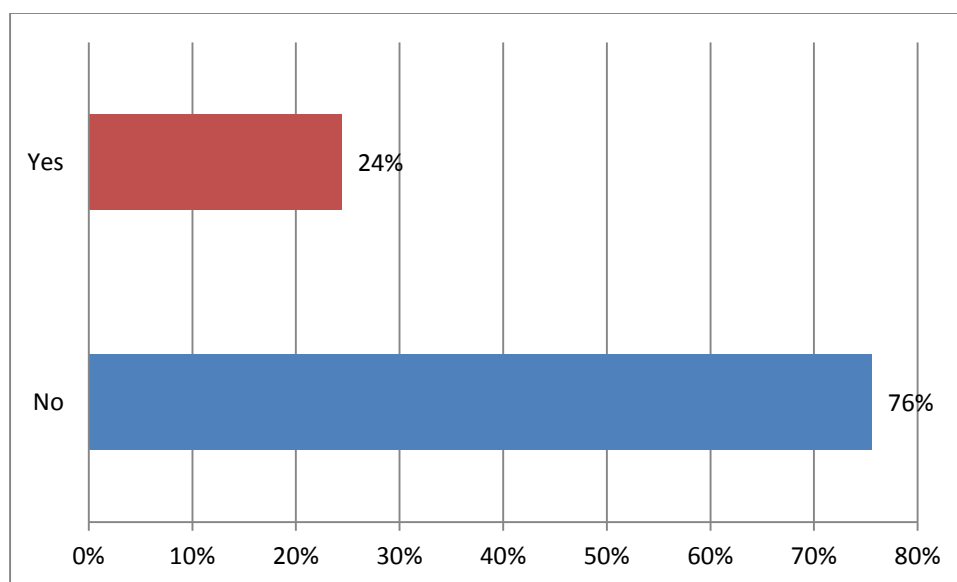
Figure 29 – Survey Question 25

Narrative, open-ended responses were provided to survey questions 26 and 27. Because many respondents listed more than one advantage or benefit, 242 different advantages were captured in 148 responses. The 242 advantages were manually classified into six broad categories (Table 1). The majority of respondents (54.5%) stated that the key advantages or benefits of job rotations include broadening of knowledge and skills in other competency areas as well as continuous learning opportunities. Other benefits were described as networking, stakeholder management and stakeholder relationship development, lessons learned (cross-pollination), better processes, shared ideas and best practices, greater appreciation of challenges in other organizations, balanced perspectives, career enhancement, increased visibility of competencies and work ethics, exposure to different leadership styles, improved communication, ability to influence departmental decisions, improved morale, and change in general. Change was described as the opportunity to experience something new and to get out of the rut or routine.

Table 1 – Survey Question 26: Advantages or Benefits of Job Rotations or Developmental Assignments

Summation of Major Categories of Open-ended Responses	# Other Responses from Question 26	% Other Responses from Question 26
Broaden knowledge and skills in other competency areas and continuous learning	132	54.5
Networking, stakeholder management/development, develop professional relationships	34	14
Lessons learned and better processes and shared ideas and best practices	30	12.4
Appreciation of challenges in other organizations/balanced perspectives	20	8.3
Career enhancement and increased visibility of competence/work ethics	13	5.4
Other: change, exposure to different leadership styles, improve communication, influence departmental decisions, morale, and other responses	13	5.4
TOTAL	242	100

Narrative responses to question 27 are captured by percentage in Table 2. Responses were manually categorized into broad groupings. The 147 respondents provided a total of 160 barriers or disadvantages, and these 160 items were grouped into 12 categories based on an assessment of similarities in the descriptions. The most frequent disadvantages of job rotations accounted for 27% of all responses, including short-term organizational disruption, learning-curve issues, additional workload for the parent organization, and staffing shortages resulting in continuity-of-operations issues. Sixteen percent of the responses cited critical acquisition positions and a lack of capability to back-fill these positions as a barrier to job rotation programs.

Table 2 – Survey Question 27: Disadvantages of or Barriers to Job Rotations or Developmental Assignments

Summation of Major Categories of Open-ended Responses	# Other Responses from Question 26	% Other Responses from Question 26
Short-term disruption, learning-curve issues, additional workload for home organization, staffing shortages resulting in continuity-of-operations issues	43	26.9
Critical acquisition position—no back-fill	26	16.3
Lost momentum (lost technical/historical/corporate knowledge)	13	8.1
Rotational work not associated with grade or expectations or unqualified; no or poor plan	11	6.9
Never become an expert/lack of technical depth	10	6.3
Leadership resistance/complicated approval process	10	6.3
Career blocker ("Out of sight, out of mind")	10	6.3
Perception of employee dissatisfaction with current job if seeking rotation; perception of disloyalty	9	5.6
Lack of opportunities for assignments	6	3.8
Organizational culture bias and barriers to new ideas; difficulty of introducing agile acquisition concept to DoD	6	3.8
No correlation to home organization; bad fit; lack of recognition of experience and knowledge attained from parent/home organization	6	3.8
Other: current acquisition culture is ineffective and broken—fix that before rotations; misuse of rotational assignments; budget cuts; difficulty of moving billets; and other responses	10	6.3
TOTAL	160	100

Summary

Findings from the interviews of senior DoD leaders demonstrate a need for a flexible and adaptable civilian workforce to meet the challenges and changes of today's fiscal, political, and operational environment. Job rotations or developmental assignments help employees and leaders look at the big picture and focus strategically on success of the Army enterprise mission. Interview findings indicate a preference for applying job rotations and developmental assignments to all members at all levels of the organization, but the emphasis should be on

finding the right fit and not instituting a job rotation program without proper planning, communication, and criteria. Holding supervisors accountable for the development of their employees and providing an atmosphere that accepts the risk is essential to a successful developmental program.

Findings from the interviews, surveys, and literature all identify benefits of job rotations within organizations, including improved networks and long-term relationships between organizations or departments, increased depth of organizational knowledge, best practices and optimization of lessons learned, and exposure to different leadership styles, among others. Some disadvantages reported in the survey and also captured in the literature include additional work, lost corporate knowledge, lack of technical depth, and poor perceptions about the intent of the program or intent of the employee. While the literature review indicated that "the key to keeping high performing employees is to create an environment in which they want to stay and grow" (Mathis et al., 2014, p. 167), the survey results did not draw a direct relationship between job rotations and retention rates. Additional barriers to implementing job rotation in the Army acquisition civilian workforce were attributed to a lack of funding, difficulty moving people due to personnel and pay systems, leadership resistance, a complicated approval process, and organizational culture bias toward new initiatives.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research is to consider job rotations as one way to "promote sufficient investments in DoD civilian leader education, training, and development to assess leadership competencies in the civilian Workforce and provide learning opportunities targeted to maximize overall return on investment" (DoD, 2009, p. 7). Based on this research, job rotations are considered "broadening assignments… [that] improve an individual's leadership skill set" (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p. 3).

If the Army acquisition community or individual organizations within the Army elect to implement job rotations as part of the development of civilian employees, it is recommended that the program be tailored and flexible in order to meet individual and organizational needs with flexibility to change and adapt the program instead of providing a "one size fits all" initiative. It is also recommended that the advice of the senior leader interviewees in this research be taken seriously by leadership and supervisors when it comes to holding supervisors accountable for the development of their employees and providing an atmosphere that is accepting of short-term disruption for the benefit of the long-term goals of the Army as an enterprise.

Army leadership and culture should support employee development with an emphasis on the supervisor's responsibility to take an active role in the process of developing all of their employees. While the Army requires supervisory performance objectives as a part of the performance measurement system, supervisors are not held accountable to these objectives. "Requiring all managers to oversee the career development of their employees or suffer 'financial and career consequences'" (Gale, 2001) should be part of the Army's strategy or policy.

One of the barriers or obstacles to job rotation programs is the wide variety of pay systems throughout the Army acquisition community, including the general schedule pay system (not a broad band system), the acquisition demonstration project pay system (a broad band system), and the personnel demonstration project pay system (a broad band system), to name just three. These pay systems all have different rules and restrictions that make it difficult, but not impossible, to move employees across positions. Broadbanding is the "practice of using fewer pay grades with much broader ranges than in traditional compensation systems" (Mathis et al., p. 395). "Broadbanding…[is] "designed to encourage horizontal movement and therefore more skill acquisition. The main advantage of broadbanding is that it is more consistent with the flattening of organizational levels and the growing use of jobs that are multidimensional" (Mathiset al., 2014, p. 395).

The GAO (2012b) provided several recommendations that can be applied to job rotation implementation within the Army acquisition civilian workforce:

Harness internal motivations: Prospective rotation program participants may be motivated by personal interest, beliefs, or other intrinsic factors. As a human capital expert we spoke with noted, one way to encourage individuals to take assignments outside of their home organization is to tap into their desire "to do the right thing." If an organization can articulate how and why a rotation is for the greater good, it can serve as a powerful incentive.

Use performance management systems: [Organizations] should ensure that they have the means to recognize and reward accomplishments and good performance outside the home [organization].

Factor rotations into promotion decisions: Personnel may be encouraged to participate in rotation programs if agencies factor [developmental or other department or organizational] experience[s] into their promotion decisions…. Sufficient rotation opportunities must be available and safeguards should be put in place to ensure the selection process for rotation participants is fair.

Provide public recognition.

Ensure host-[organization] needs are taken into account in defining assignments: Experts indicated that placing participants in positions for which they were not qualifiedor could not contribute to host organization goals could negatively affect host-[organization] support for the program, which is crucial to its success.

Ensure participants' developmental needs are taken into account in assigning positions: Programs should have a process for reviewing candidates' developmental needs and matching them with positions that would suit them. For example, [organizations] could require that candidates submit their individual development plans or detail in their application how the rotation will help them to address their developmental needs. (pp. 9-12)

Ensuring that the job rotation or job swap is a good organization-person fit is necessary for successful implementation. While several terms were used interchangeably throughout this research, one author professes that "job swaps are easier to organize and resource than a cross-functional rotation program, although the potential scale and scope of the development opportunities are correspondingly smaller" (Bennett, 2003, p. 9).

Some of the fundamental elements that should be considered with the development of a job rotation program include the program strategy, program participants, and program details

(Bharucha, 2013). The program strategy should focus on core objectives as well as the competencies and behaviors the program is attempting to develop. Program participants should include the identification of roles of employees and supervisors, prerequisites, and skills required for participation. Program details should include such factors as length of rotation, types of rotations, responsible party for identifying and notifying participants, management of the program, budget, tracking success through metrics, and identification of metrics for success (Bharucha, 2013). In addition, position descriptions currently present obstacles to job rotations. Creating general or generic position descriptions is one method to redesign jobs to make lateral movement between positions easier to facilitate.

Based on the interview results, it is necessary to prepare the workforce and our leaders so they will be able to adapt to changes and will be flexible not only in their skill set, but in their ability to communicate with a diverse group of people from many backgrounds and functional areas. By exposing people to different leaders, different functional areas, and different organizational practices, people will focus on the bigger picture and be less wedded to one program or one organization.

Based on both the interviews and survey results, I recommend the adoption of a long-term view, which requires the investment of time to provide opportunities that benefit the employee and the Army. Rotational programs need to be flexible and need to have the commitment of leadership, supervisors, and employees. The key is to develop long-term relationships and help organizations become more aligned, more lean, and better prepared to support the warfighter. In the process of establishing a rotational program, and in the process of developing employees in general, supervisors and managers need to take an active role and coach their employees. Supervisors and managers need to be held accountable for the

development of their employees; every employee at every level needs to take an active role in continuous learning and broadening experiences. The employee development process requires more than lip service. Supervisors should be expected to understand what opportunities are available for their employees and encourage employees to participate in broadening experiences. Employee development is a responsibility that should be taken seriously for the benefit of the long-term organizational culture and mission.

This research reviewed job rotations as one tool available to develop employees and increase the readiness of the Army acquisition civilian workforce to respond to the rapidly changing environment. The emphasis in the previous statement is on the word "one;" job rotation should not be used as a sole method of developing the Workforce, nor should it be used without a strategic and flexible approach. Some other developmental tools that are recommended for use to increase the efficiency and readiness of the Army acquisition civilian workforce include job enlargement, job enrichment, shadowing, mentoring, and several other alternatives. "Job enlargement involves broadening the scope of a job by expanding the number of different tasks to be performed. Job enrichment [involves] increasing the depth of a job by adding, for example, responsibility for planning" (Mathis et al., 2014, p. 121).

Budget reductions throughout the Army acquisition portfolio are imminent based on the BCA, sequestration, and leadership guidance. The Defense Business Board recommended that the **"**SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] should drive the downsizing process and instill a sense of urgency in developing a detailed downsizing plan… Major reductions to overhead and Headquarters staff will be the 'signal' that SECDEF is serious" (Defense Business Board, 2013, p. 9). Army leaders must be innovative and strategic in aligning the workforce with mission and funding because "when companies cannibalize the human resources needed to change,

restructure, or innovate, disruption follows for some time. Also, downsizing can hurt productivity by leaving 'surviving' employees overburdened and demoralized" (Mathis et al., 2014, p. 55). My recommendation is to use the human resources the Army has most efficiently so the Army is able to continue accomplishing its mission with a civilian workforce prepared for greater responsibility due to a greater understanding of Army priorities and greater depth of knowledge attributable to appropriate and strategically planned rotational assignments.

As supported by academic research and professional experience (conveyed in the interview with a member of the SES), "whether an organization can remain effective is largely dependent upon whether it is sufficiently adaptive to changing conditions" (Brown, 2011, p. 43). Brown (2011) further supports the position of the interviewee in finding that "organizations in a dynamic environment must have the capacity to adapt quickly in order to survive" (p. 144). The ability of the acquisition workforce to adapt to changes and understand the complexities of the Army enterprise and dynamic environment is critical to the continued readiness of the Army; providing employees at all levels with opportunities to experience different organizations, leadership styles, departments, practices, procedures, and functions is one way to improve the readiness and resilience of the Army acquisition community.

"By sharing our knowledge, ideas, and best practices, [organizations] can collaborate to not only reach but exceed their training goals by developing top notch" (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d.). Broadening experiences and assignments provide one way to improve communication, networks, knowledge, skills, and abilities. The key to continued readiness of the Army acquisition civilian workforce is the ability to use the resources most effectively and efficiently. Short-term obstacles that lead to long-term benefits is a trade-off our Army should be willing to take. This requires a change in culture where acceptance of mistakes and

encouragement of increased depth of knowledge is articulated consistently at all levels of the Army enterprise.

Further Research Recommendations

Further research is recommended in reference to survey question 3, which asked how many years the employee has been a Federal Government civilian employee. The survey revealed that 20% of the respondents in grades GS-14/15 or equivalent pay band have been a Federal Government civilian for less than 10 years. It would be interesting to learn the different reasons for and career paths that led to the senior-level placement of civilians into GS-14/15 grades with less than 10 years of service. In addition, this research targeted GS-14/15–level Government civilian employees; further studies may contribute to this research with data "collected from several levels and departments [throughout the Army], but different questions may be needed for each of them" (Brown, 2011, p. 126).

Further research is also recommended to explore the actual composition of the civilian acquisition workforce, what qualifies a civilian employee as a member of the "acquisition community," and what opportunities are employees and the Army unable to benefit from due to a lack of acquisition training and certification by members of the Army not formally in the acquisition workforce. As the survey results indicate, a significant portion of the Army civilian APG community do not consider themselves members of the "acquisition community." Some examples are GS-14/15 or equivalent civilians in the Army Research Laboratory; sections of Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center (ECBC); U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense; Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM); and elements of the Communications and Electronics Command (CECOM).

Is there any reason that every civilian Army employee should not be considered a member of the acquisition community to the extent that each person's efforts in some way affects some part of the acquisition life-cycle or requirements process? With regard to RDECOM and its components, specifically Army Research Laboratory and ECBC, the employees of these organizations are keenly aware of how their research and development efforts utilizing the 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 appropriations fit into the acquisition process with intentions of leading to better protected, prepared, reactive, and responsive warfighter capabilities. With regard to CECOM, efforts in all areas of the workforce contribute in some way to the readiness of the warfighter, whether from an administrative function or a sustainment function. While many employees from these organizations and other Army organizations on APG and around the globe may not be on an acquisition-coded position description, each is an active member of the Army acquisition community. What opportunities are these employees unable to pursue or participate in? Should leaders, supervisors, mentors, and coaches encourage nonacquisition-coded employees who work within the acquisition community to pursue formal acquisition training and certification for the benefit of the employee's career development and for the benefit of the Army?

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

AAWF........................Army acquisition workforce

APG............................Aberdeen Proving Ground

BCA ....Budget Control Act

CBO ....Congressional Budget Office

CECOM ....Communications and Engineering Command

DHS............................Department of Homeland Security

DoD............................Department of Defense

DoDI ....Department of Defense Instruction

ECBC ....Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center

FY ....Fiscal Year

GAO ....Government Accountability Office (formerly General Accounting Office)

GS ....General Schedule

H_0 ....Null Hypothesis

H_1 ....Alternate Hypothesis

IT...............................Information Technology

OCO ....Overseas Contingency Operations

PCS ....Permanent Change of Station

PEO............................Program Executive Office

PM..............................Project, Product or Program Manager

RDECOM ....Research, Development and Engineering Command

SECDEF.....................Secretary of Defense

Appendix A – Survey Instrument

Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

Thank you for participating in this Senior Service College Fellowship resea...

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

As an adult 18 years of age or older, I agree to participate in this research about Rotational and Developmental Assignments and their impact on the Army Acquisition workforce. This survey is being conducted to support research efforts being performed by Jennifer Worton, a student of the Senior Service College Fellowship Program of the Defense Acquisition University.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time. By agreeing to participate in this study, I indicate that I understand the following:

1. The purpose of the research assess the usage and impact of rotational and developmental assignments of Army Acquisition workforce employees on the retention and readiness of the Army Acquisition workforce in terms of ability to meet the needs of the Warfighter in a rapidly changing fiscal, political, and technological environment.

2. If I choose to participate in this research, I will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will include items relating to the Rotational and Developmental assignments. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

3. There is no incentive for participation.

4. All items in the questionnaire are important for analysis, and my data input will be more meaningful if all questions are answered. However, I do not have to answer any that I prefer not to answer. I can discontinue my participation at any time without penalty by exiting out of the survey.

5. This research will not expose me to any discomfort or stress beyond that which might normally occur during a typical day. There are no right or wrong answers; thus, I need not be stressed about finding a correct answer.

6. There are no known risks associated with my participating in this study.

7. Data collected will be handled in a confidential manner. The data collected will remain anonymous.

8. The purpose of this research has been explained and my participation is entirely voluntary.

9. I understand that the research entails no known risks and by completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in this research.

END OF INFORMED CONSENT

Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

1. I have read the Informed Consent Agreement and will participate voluntarily.

○ Yes

○ No

2. My current grade is

○ GS-5 to GS-11 (or equivalent)

○ GS-12 to GS-13 (or equivalent)

○ GS-14 to GS-15 (or equivalent) and above

3. I have been a government civilian for

○ 1 - 3 years

○ 3 - 5 years

○ 5 - 10 years

○ More than 10 years

4. How many different positions have you held as a government civilian?

○ 1 - 2

○ 3 - 5

○ more than 5

5. I am currently a member of the acquisition workforce.

○ Yes

○ No

6. I have been with my current organization for

- ◯ 1 - 3 years
- ◯ 3 - 5 years
- ◯ 5 - 10 years
- ◯ More than 10 years

7. In my professional opinion, the optimal time to remain in one position is:

- ◯ 1 - 3 years
- ◯ 3 - 5 years
- ◯ 5 years or longer

8. The length of a job rotation would be most effective in terms of the ability to understand and perform the functions of another position if the rotational assignment's length is:

- ◯ 3 - 6 months
- ◯ 12 months
- ◯ 1 - 2 years
- ◯ more than 2 years

9. Performance quality and productivty will decrease with the implementation of job rotations in the Army Acquisition workforce.

- ◯ Strongly Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

10. In my professional opinion, job rotations or developmental assignments in other elements of the Army Acquisition community would increase the retention of employees within the Army Acquisition workforce.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

11. As a supervisor, I would be supportive of job rotations if I knew the employee would return to my organization at the end of the assignment.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

12. In my professional opinion, if I were to participate in job rotations or developmental assignments in other elements of the Army Acquisition community, my value as an Army employee would increase.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

13. In my professional opinion, job rotations or developmental assignments in other elements of the Army Acquisition community would enhance my professional development.

◯ Strongly Disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Agree

◯ Strongly Agree

14. As a supervisor, I would be supportive of job rotations if I received a swap or replacement for the length of the rotational assignment.

◯ Strongly Disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Agree

◯ Strongly Agree

15. As an employee, I would be more supportive of job rotations if I had assurance that I would return to my parent organization upon completion or was assured an equivalent position at the completion of the assignment.

◯ Strongly Disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Agree

◯ Strongly Agree

16. Leadership in my organization supports and promotes job rotations.

◯ Yes

◯ No

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Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

17. I encourage my subordinates to take developmental assignments.

○ Yes

○ No

18. I would not want to participate in a rotational assignment because I

○ have a position that is too critical to leave for a period of time.

○ enjoy where I work and don't want to go somewhere else where the environment or culture is not a good fit for me.

○ have no desire to learn something new.

○ am happy doing what I do each day.

○ N/A - I would want to do a rotational assignment

○ Other (please specify)

19. My organization uses some form of job rotation program or developmental assignment now to broaden knowledge, skills, and abilities.

○ Yes

○ No

20. I have perceived a positive change in organizational morale since the implementation of job rotations in my organization.

○ Yes
○ No

21. My organization has seen a decrease in voluntary departures from the organization since the implementation of job rotations.

○ Yes
○ No

22. I have seen an increase in workload attributed to the implementation of job rotations.

○ Yes
○ No

23. I implemented or changed practices or procedures learned from experiences within another organization (I took lessons learned from one organization and implemented these practices in another organization).

○ Yes
○ No

24. Rotational and developmental assignments have helped my organization deal with change.

○ Yes
○ No

25. I have seen an decrease in productivity which is attributed to the implementation of job rotations.

○ Yes
○ No

Appendix B – Responses of All GS-14/15 and Equivalent

(Includes Nonacquisition)

Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

Q1 I have read the Informed Consent Agreement and will participate voluntarily.

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
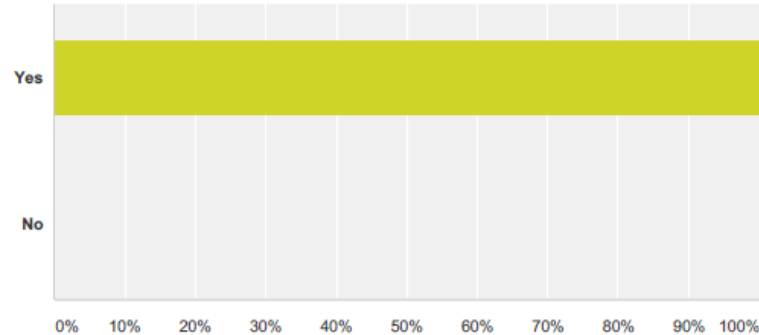
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	267
No	0.00%	0
Total		267

Q2 My current grade is

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
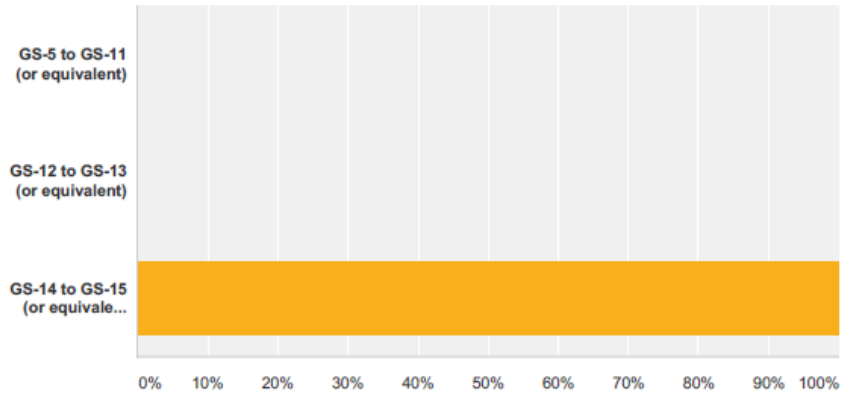
Answer Choices	Responses	
GS-5 to GS-11 (or equivalent)	0.00%	0
GS-12 to GS-13 (or equivalent)	0.00%	0
GS-14 to GS-15 (or equivalent) and above	100.00%	267
Total		267

Q3 I have been a government civilian for

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
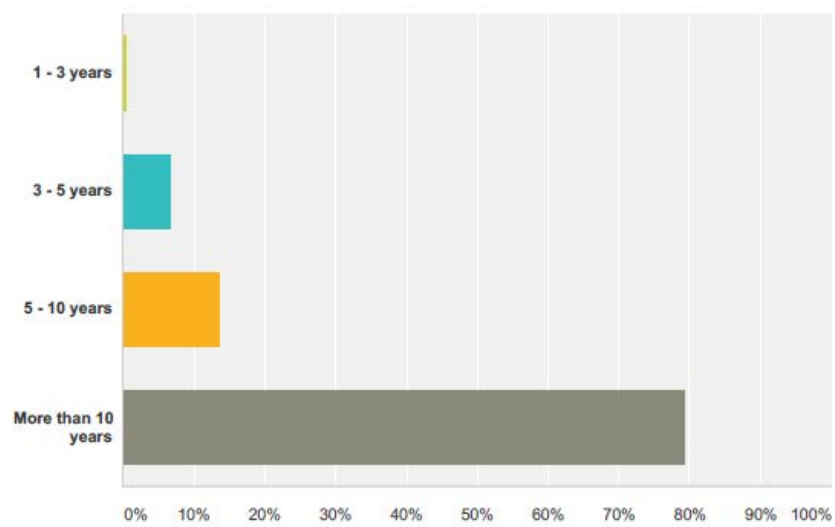
Answer Choices	Responses	
1 - 3 years	0.37%	1
3 - 5 years	6.74%	18
5 - 10 years	13.48%	36
More than 10 years	79.40%	212
Total		267

Q4 How many different positions have you held as a government civilian?

Answered: 266   Skipped: 1
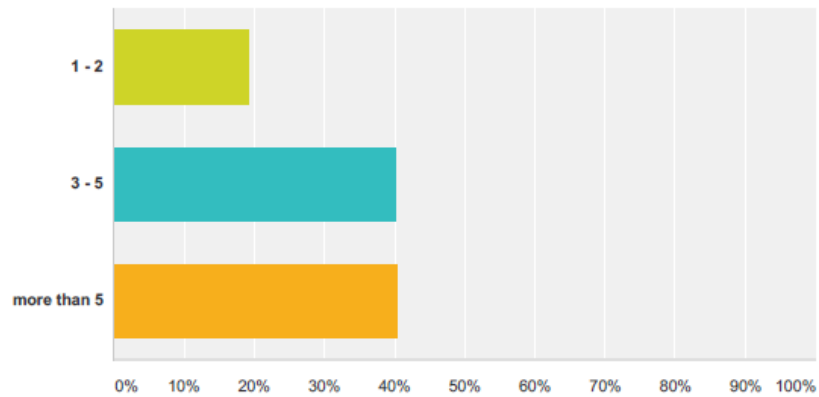
Answer Choices	Responses	
1 - 2	19.17%	51
3 - 5	40.23%	107
more than 5	40.60%	108
Total		266

Q5 I am currently a member of the acquisition workforce.

Answered: 264   Skipped: 3
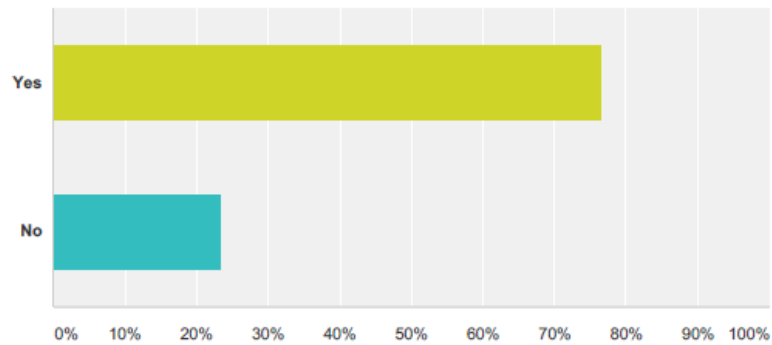
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	76.52%	202
No	23.48%	62
Total		264

Q6 I have been with my current organization for

Answered: 265   Skipped: 2
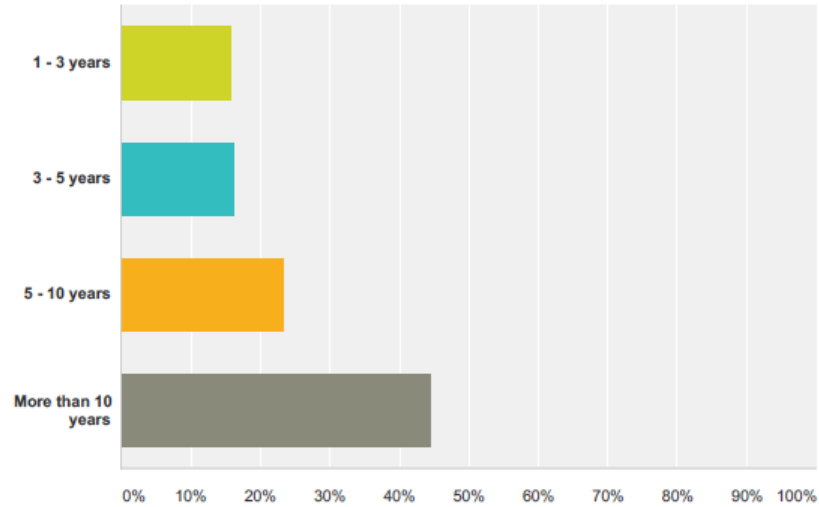
Answer Choices	Responses	
1 - 3 years	15.85%	42
3 - 5 years	16.23%	43
5 - 10 years	23.40%	62
More than 10 years	44.53%	118
Total		265

Q7 In my professional opinion, the optimal time to remain in one position is:

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
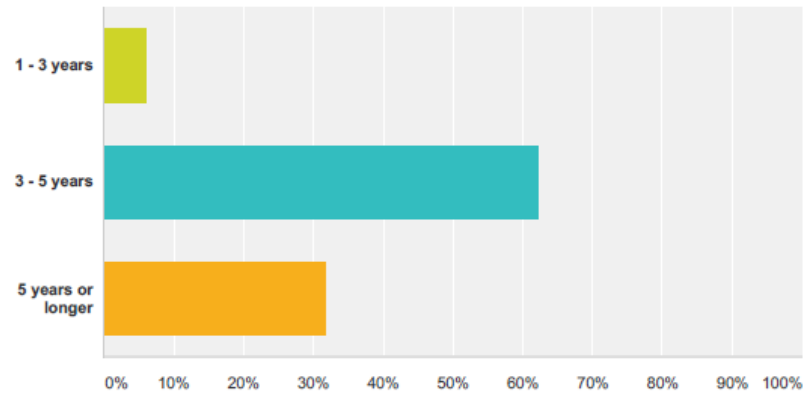
Answer Choices	Responses	
1 - 3 years	5.99%	16
3 - 5 years	62.17%	166
5 years or longer	31.84%	85
Total		267

Q8 The length of a job rotation would be most effective in terms of the ability to understand and perform the functions of another position if the rotational assignment's length is:

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
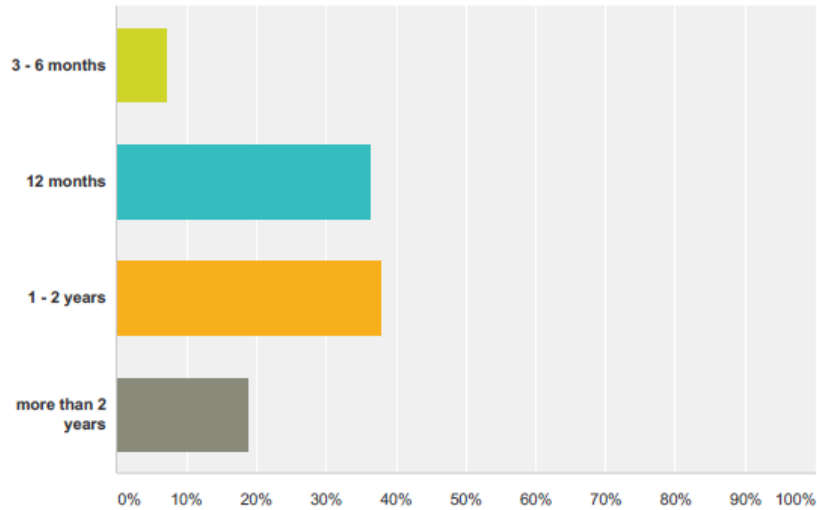
Answer Choices	Responses	
3 - 6 months	7.12%	19
12 months	36.33%	97
1 - 2 years	37.83%	101
more than 2 years	18.73%	50
Total		**267**

Q9 Performance quality and productivity will decrease with the implementation of job rotations in the Army Acquisition workforce.

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
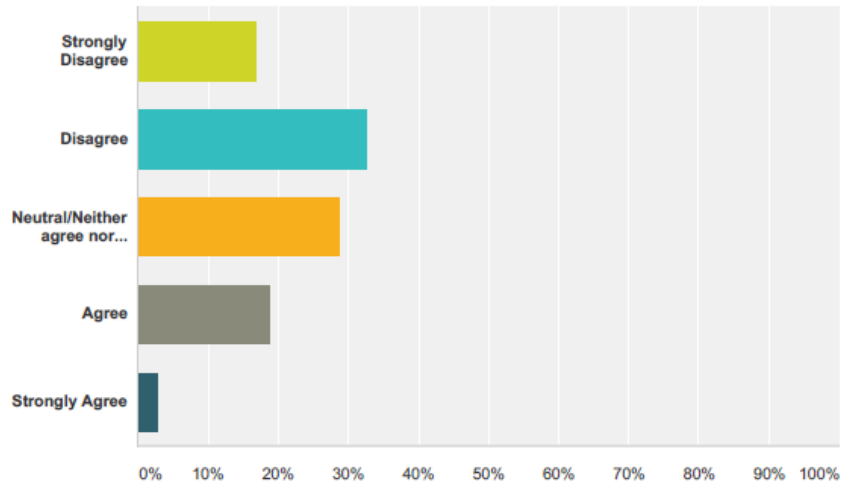
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	16.85%	45
Disagree	32.58%	87
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	28.84%	77
Agree	18.73%	50
Strongly Agree	3.00%	8
Total		267

Q10 In my professional opinion, job rotations or developmental assignments in other elements of the Army Acquisition community would increase the retention of employees within the Army Acquisition workforce.

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
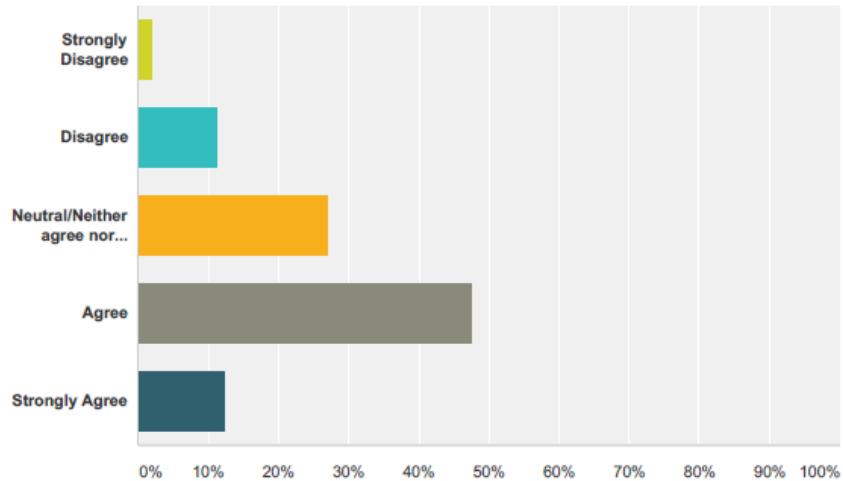
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.87%	5
Disagree	11.24%	30
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	26.97%	72
Agree	47.57%	127
Strongly Agree	12.36%	33
Total		267

Q11 As a supervisor, I would be supportive of job rotations if I knew the employee would return to my organization at the end of the assignment.

Answered: 263   Skipped: 4
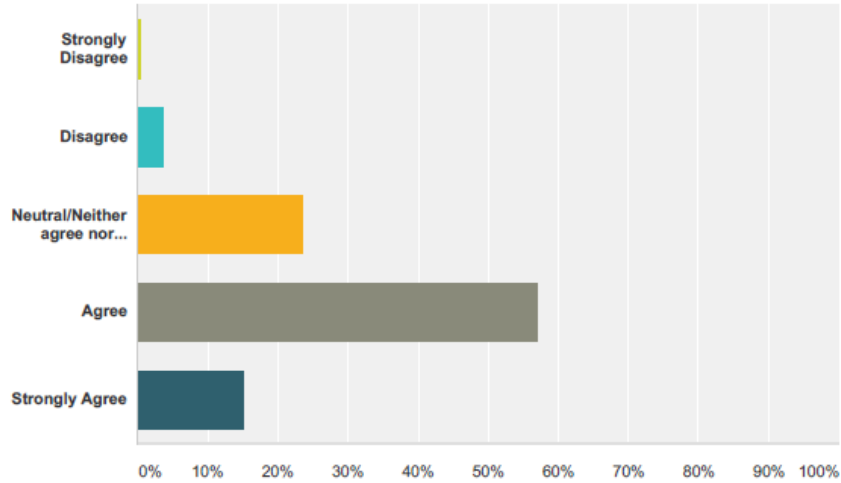
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.38%	1
Disagree	3.80%	10
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	23.57%	62
Agree	57.03%	150
Strongly Agree	15.21%	40
Total		**263**

Q12 In my professional opinion, if I were to participate in job rotations or developmental assignments in other elements of the Army Acquisition community, my value as an Army employee would increase.

Answered: 267   Skipped: 0
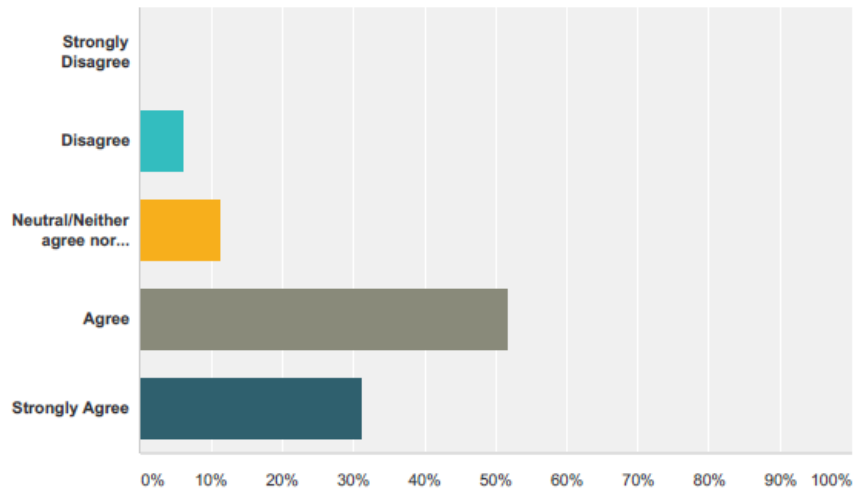
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	5.99%	16
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	11.24%	30
Agree	51.69%	138
Strongly Agree	31.09%	83
Total		**267**

Q13 In my professional opinion, job rotations or developmental assignments in other elements of the Army Acquisition community would enhance my professional development.

Answered: 264   Skipped: 3
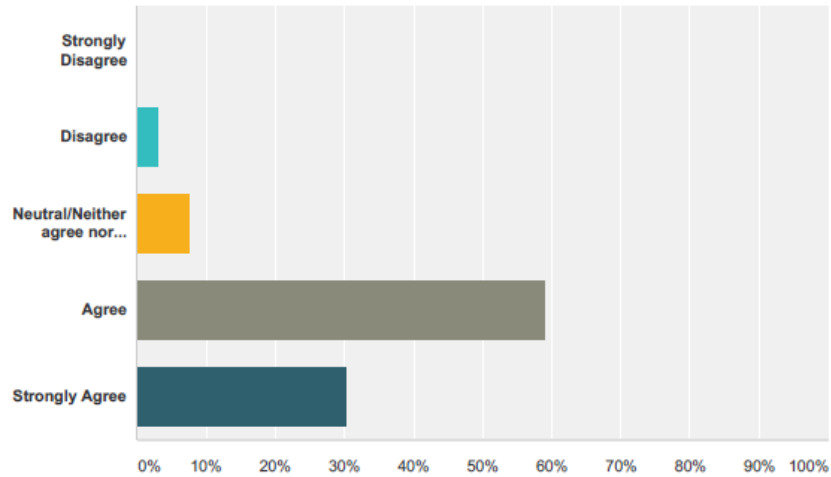
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	3.03%	8
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	7.58%	20
Agree	59.09%	156
Strongly Agree	30.30%	80
Total		**264**

Q14 As a supervisor, I would be supportive of job rotations if I received a swap or replacement for the length of the rotational assignment.

Answered: 263   Skipped: 4
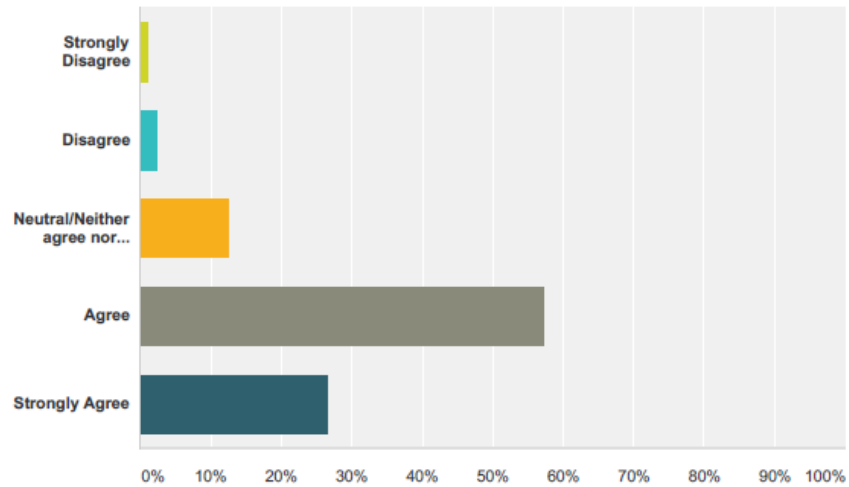
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.14%	3
Disagree	2.28%	6
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	12.55%	33
Agree	57.41%	151
Strongly Agree	26.62%	70
Total		263

Q15 As an employee, I would be more supportive of job rotations if I had assurance that I would return to my parent organization upon completion or was assured an equivalent position at the completion of the assignment.

Answered: 265   Skipped: 2
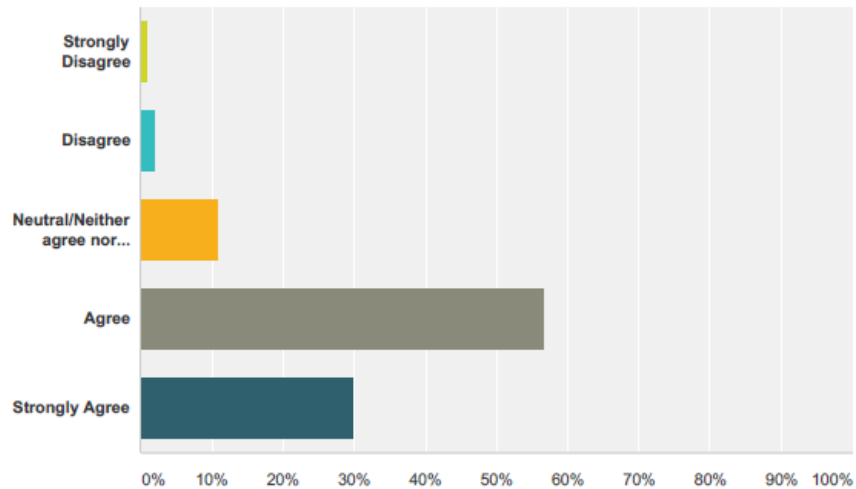
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.75%	2
Disagree	1.89%	5
Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree	10.94%	29
Agree	56.60%	150
Strongly Agree	29.81%	79
Total		**265**

Q16 Leadership in my organization supports and promotes job rotations.

Answered: 261 Skipped: 6
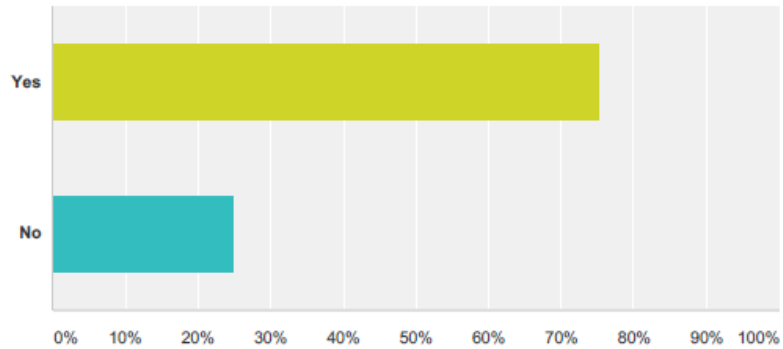
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	75.10%	196
No	24.90%	65
Total		261

Q17 I encourage my subordinates to take developmental assignments.

Answered: 260 Skipped: 7
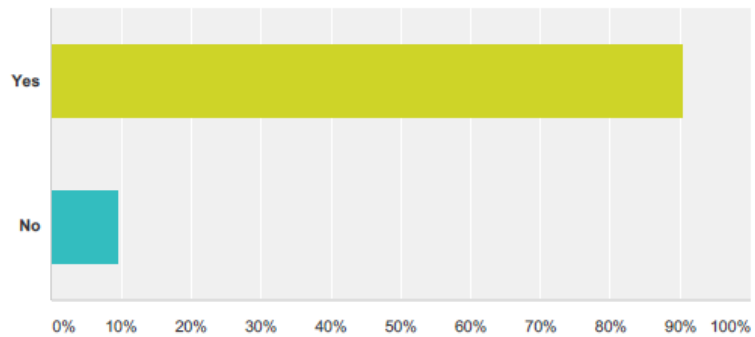
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	90.38%	235
No	9.62%	25
Total		260

Q18 I would not want to participate in a rotational assignment because I

Answered: 265   Skipped: 2
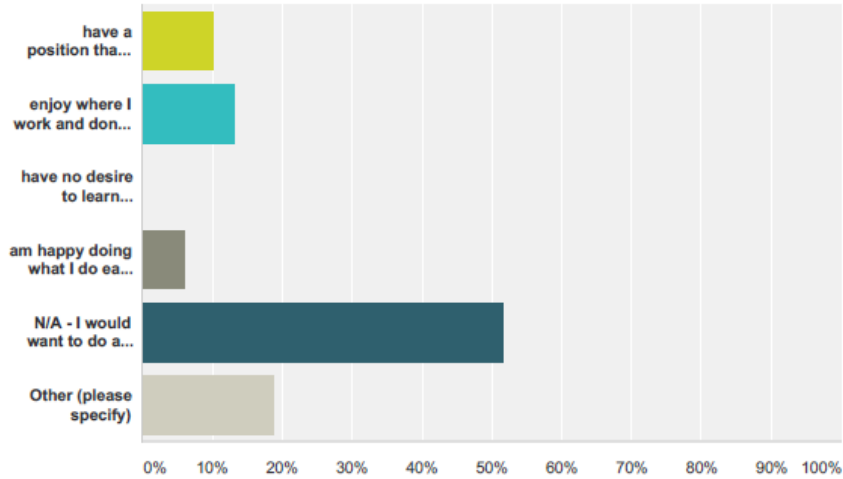
Answer Choices	Responses	
have a position that is too critical to leave for a period of time.	10.19%	27
enjoy where I work and don't want to go somewhere else where the environment or culture is not a good fit for me.	13.21%	35
have no desire to learn something new.	0.00%	0
am happy doing what I do each day.	6.04%	16
N/A - I would want to do a rotational assignment	51.70%	137
Other (please specify)	18.87%	50
Total		**265**

Q19 My organization uses some form of job rotation program or developmental assignment now to broaden knowledge, skills, and abilities.
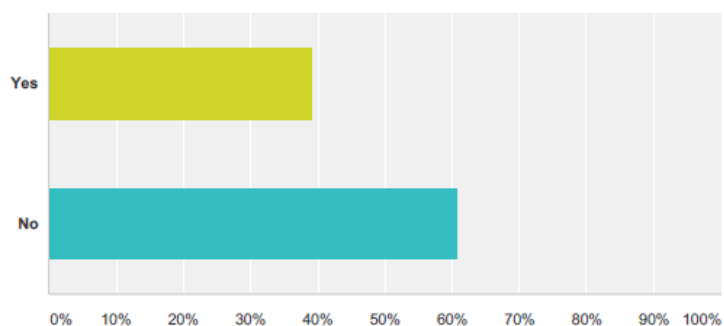
Answered: 263   Skipped: 4
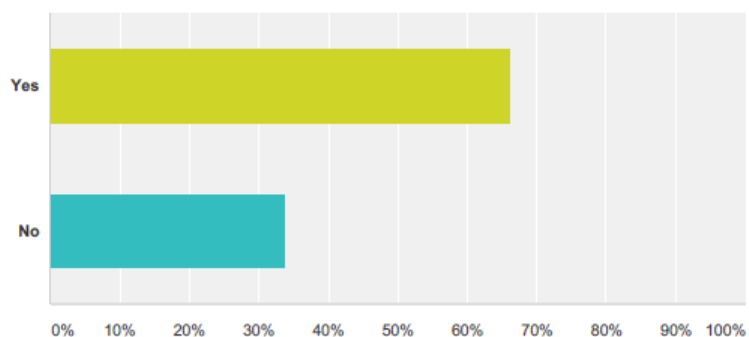
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	66.16%	174
No	33.84%	89
Total		263

Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

Q20 I have perceived a positive change in organizational morale since the implementation of job rotations in my organization.
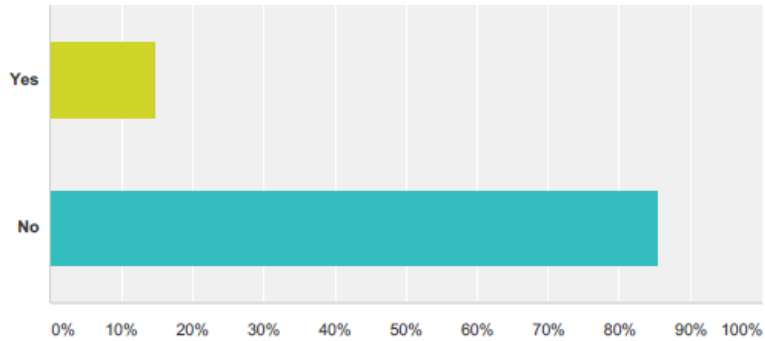
Answered: 168   Skipped: 99

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	39.29%	66
No	60.71%	102
Total		168

Q21 My organization has seen a decrease in voluntary departures from the organization since the implementation of job rotations.
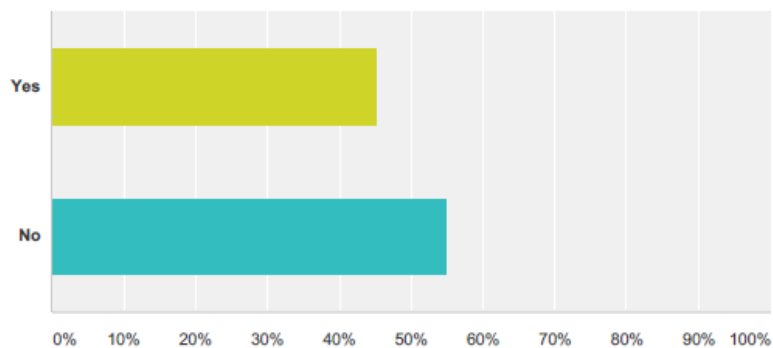
Answered: 165   Skipped: 102

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	14.55%	24
No	85.45%	141
Total		165

Rotational Assignments within the Army Acquisition Workforce

Q22 I have seen an increase in workload attributed to the implementation of job rotations.

Answered: 166   Skipped: 101

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	45.18%	75
No	54.82%	91
Total		166

110

Q23 I implemented or changed practices or procedures learned from experiences within another organization (I took lessons learned from one organization and implemented these practices in another organization).
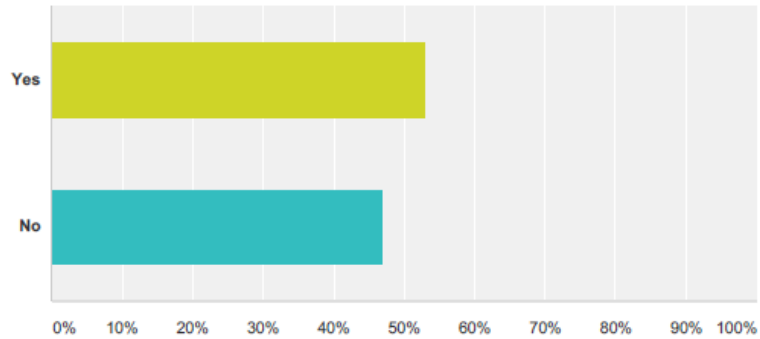
Answered: 165   Skipped: 102
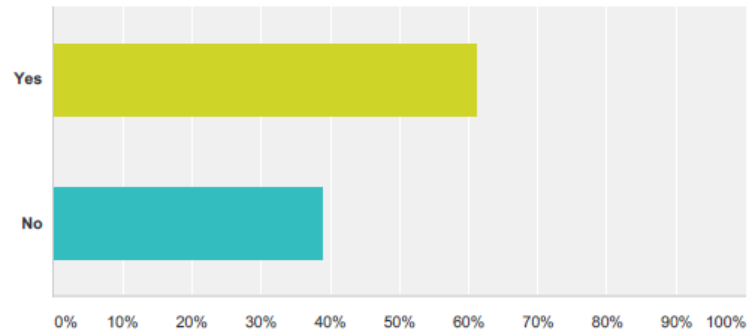
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	61.21%	101
No	38.79%	64
Total		165

Q24 Rotational and developmental assignments have helped my organization deal with change.

Answered: 164 Skipped: 103

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	53.05%	87
No	46.95%	77
Total		164

Q25 I have seen an decrease in productivity which is attributed to the implementation of job rotations.

Answered: 165 Skipped: 102
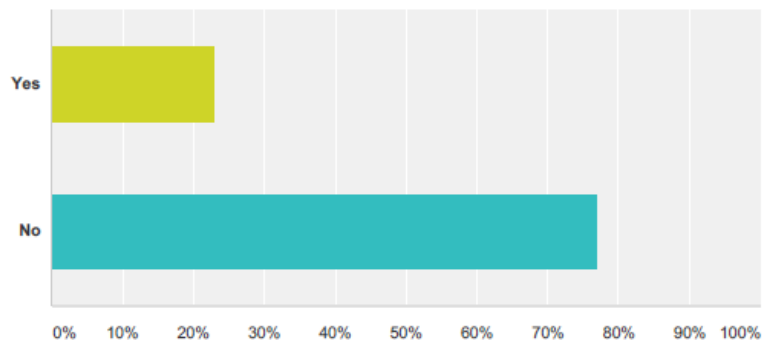
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	23.03%	38
No	76.97%	127
Total		165